

## Endline evaluation for the project

“Building leadership of women and young girls at grassroots level to prevent violence and strengthen rights of women and girls”

-Bihar & UP-



**Findings Report  
Submitted by:**



**CRAFT CONSULTANCY**

**Submitted for:**



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## ACRONYMS

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| CAPI  | Computer Aided Personal Interviews       |
| CDPO  | Child Development and Protection Officer |
| Ctrl. | Control                                  |
| DV    | Domestic Violence                        |
| EL    | Endline                                  |
| EMR   | Elected Men Representative               |
| ER    | Elected Representative                   |
| EWR   | Elected Woman Representative             |
| FGD   | Focus Group Discussion                   |
| GBD   | Gender Based Discrimination              |
| GBV   | Gender Based Violence                    |
| GDPR  | General Data Protection Regulation       |
| GP    | Gram Panchayat                           |
| IDI   | In Depth Interview                       |
| Int.  | Intervention                             |
| MPMS  | Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti               |
| NGO   | Non-Government Organization              |
| PRI   | Panchayati Raj Institutions              |
| SDM   | Sub Divisional Magistrate                |
| SHG   | Self Help group                          |
| VAW   | Violence against women                   |
| WC    | Women Collective                         |

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### **BACKGROUND**

The "Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti" (MPMS) program's third phase focuses on empowering Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in five districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The program aims to enhance leadership of elected women representatives, women collectives, Young girls, improving the inclusive gender planning at the local governance system like Panchayat, create safe public spaces for them, and effectively address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Over nearly two decades, CREA has been committed to creating a gender-just world by supporting marginalized voices, particularly women marginalized by strengthening feminist leadership and education, the SRHR capacity, feminist movements, gender intersections of language, caste religion class and identity and addressing SGBV.

### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The MPMS program was initiated in 2015 and has undergone multiple phases:

- Phase I (2015): Launched in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by training over 2000 EWRs and 3000 women collective members on political systems, gender-based discrimination, rights, and violence.
- Phase II (2018): Continued engagement with local NGOs, EWRs, and Women collectives and introduced Health Service Providers (HSPs) to support and advance the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) of women and girls.
- Phase III (2021): Rolled out to covered 50 Gram Panchayats across selected blocks in Bareilly and Mahoba districts in Uttar Pradesh, and Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, and Patna in Bihar. This phase included newly elected EWRs and aimed to reach to around 3000 women including EWRs, Women leaders from collectives and adolescent & young women. Apart from women, the program aimed to reach out to HSPs, Male PRI members and community stakeholders.

### **OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS**

The specific objective of Phase III was to build a sustainable and inclusive grassroots women's and young girls capacity to address GBV and strengthen the feminist movement in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to strengthen participation in political processes and advocate for gender inclusive planning process.

Key outputs include:

- Increased knowledge, capacity, and skills of women and girls to raise issues related to gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, and safety.
- Capacity building of grassroots women-led organizations to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches and strengthen networking.
- Strengthened capacity to advocate for SRHR and address girls' education with health, education, and political institutions.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a quasi-experimental mixed methods design, comprising quantitative and qualitative components:

- Quantitative: Included intervention and comparison arms with EWRs (157-Int.; 100-Comp.), women leaders (182-Int.; 105-Comp.), and adolescent & young women (176-Int.; 104-Comp.) from both program coverage and similar non-program geographies. The sample size was calculated to ensure robust results.
- Qualitative: Used focus group discussions (7 with women leaders, 7 with Young women & 5 with EWRs), in-depth interviews (7 each with HSPs & Male PRI members and 2 Program Staff) and 10 Case stories to capture the perceived contributions of the program.



## **KEY FINDINGS FROM EWR SEGMENT**

In terms of the profile of EWRs surveyed in this study, Uttar Pradesh has a higher Muslim population (21%) and a greater proportion of Scheduled Castes (51.1%), while Bihar has a larger Hindu population (92%) and more Other Backward Classes (60%). Literacy rates are higher in Bihar, with 23% of the intervention group having secondary education, compared to 4% in Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, 36% of EWRs in Uttar Pradesh engage in additional paid work, and 35% are involved in agricultural labor, higher than Bihar's 25% and 7%, respectively. Most EWRs are married and belong to nuclear families, and all have bank accounts, with 98% having single accounts and 85% managing them independently. The intervention groups show higher electoral participation, with 51% contesting two or more elections as compared to 42% from the comparison group. 36% from the Intervention group and 16% from the comparison group contested for elections to bring more issues of women and young women in the Gram Panchayat planning process.

The MPMS program has been instrumental in disseminating knowledge. 85% of EWR in intervention areas received training. The gain in knowledge is leading to increased confidence to speak openly in public (82%- UP; 72%- Bihar) and in recognizing / resolving issues of domestic violence (44%- UP; 24%- Bihar). In intervention areas, awareness of gender-based discrimination (99%) and violence is high (99%), compared to 84% and 85% respectively in comparison areas. The primary sources of this knowledge are MPMS training sessions (95%) and government programs (25%) in intervention areas; while the main sources are Mass Media (46%) & Social Media (34%) in comparison areas.

EWRs in intervention areas participate more actively in local governance, attending meetings regularly (42% Int.; 20% Comp.) and often unaccompanied (49% Int.; 23% Comp.). Family support for contesting elections is high at 96% across both intervention and comparison areas. Interactions with PRI members and higher-level officials are more frequent in intervention areas, with 31% EWRs from the intervention group and 21% from comparison group often meeting with PRI members, and 7% and 2%, respectively, often meeting with higher officials.

EWRs in intervention areas are more involved in developmental activities, such as Organizing Gram Sabha's and solving village issues (44%-Int.; 27%- Comp.); Supervising the anganwadi for improving nutrition status of women and girls (31%-Int.; 13%- Comp.); Give benefit to women / young girls in all fields/ women's development (33%-Int.; 8%- Comp.); Work on resolving/supporting cases of DV/VAW and gender discrimination/ take up cases 33%-Int.; 8%- Comp.); Prevent child marriage (26%-Int.; 3%- Comp.); Generate awareness about climate change and its impact on women (17%-Int.; 7%- Comp.). Interface meetings with stakeholders, such as health service providers and young girls, are more frequent in the intervention group (More than once a quarter - 16%- Int; 2%- Comp.), leading to collaborative actions on community health and gender rights. These meetings have significantly improved their understanding of access related issues to information related to SRHR (40%- Int.; 22%- Comp.) and access to health-related services (51%- Int.; 26%- Comp.).

Addressing issues related to girls and women is more prominent in intervention areas, with a higher proportion of EWRs mentioned their achievement in establishing vigilance against early marriages (58%- Int.; 20%- Comp.), Increased access to SRHR related services and information (45%- Int.; 19%- Comp.) and Monitoring and Supervision of ASHA/ AWW / ANM activities for providing better services (41%- Int.; 19%- Comp.).

Overall, the intervention has successfully empowered EWRs, enhancing their leadership roles and their ability to address and prevent gender-based violence and discrimination through training, active participation in governance, involvement in developmental activities, and frequent stakeholder interactions.

## **KEY FINDINGS FROM WOMEN LEADERS SEGMENT**

A significant portion of the women leaders covered in the study came from marginalized communities, with 35% belonging to Scheduled Castes and 50% to Other Backward Classes. The religious composition is predominantly Hindu (93%), with a notable Muslim presence- 13% in Uttar Pradesh intervention areas. About 32% of the women covered were non-literate, while 11% in Intervention and 6% in comparison group have literacy without formal education. Most women in the collective are married (92%), with 46% of the women engaged in paid work, with diverse employment types among them: 34% in agricultural labor, 15% in skilled labor or artisan work, 20% in private service, and 12% running their own businesses.

While among the intervention group, 93% identified themselves as members of MPMS Women collective, others mentioned as part of Jeevika or other SHGs. Among the comparison group, 84% were members of Jeevika and others were members of other SHGs. Almost all of them from the intervention group mentioned they attended training programs and orientation sessions organized by MPMS, while only 27% from the comparison group attended any kind of training. More than 64% of women in intervention areas learned about violence against women, domestic violence, schemes related to women and girl's development and empowerment, early marriage & dowry through these sessions. As a result, 85% of participants from women collectives from intervention group were feeling more confident in speaking in public.

Participation in local governance is significantly higher in intervention areas, with 60% of women collective members from intervention group and 38% from Comparison group regularly or sometimes participating in Gram Sabha/Khuli Baithak meetings. Regular participation in Women Collective meetings is reported by 55% in the intervention group and 48% in the comparison group. The focus on topics such as Education of women, young girls and children (80%-Int.; 15%-Comp.); Address cases of VAW (78%-Int.; 3%-Comp.) and Issues pertaining to women's health and sanitation (65%-Int.; 30%-Comp.) is more during meetings among Women collectives from intervention group than comparison group.

56% respondents from intervention areas receive support from MPMS program in organizing rallies to sensitize the community on issues of women and girls. Interface meetings with EWRs and HSPs are organized under MPMS program, thus, there are more frequent meetings with EWRs (Once a quarter or more often - 59%- Int.; 10% Comp.) and joint meetings (Once a quarter or more often - 62%- Int.; 12% Comp.). Thus, WCs from intervention areas receive more support from EWRs than comparison areas (85%-Int., 42%-Comp.).

Women collectives in intervention areas (68%-Int.; 20%-Comp.) are more active in addressing issues specific to girls and women, with 71% in Uttar Pradesh and 67% in Bihar taking action. Similarly, WCs from intervention areas are more active in addressing gender-based violence (74%-Int.; 41%-Comp.), with 86% in Uttar Pradesh and 69% in Bihar taking action.

Advocacy for women's rights is significantly high in intervention areas, with 84% in Uttar Pradesh and 49% in Bihar participating in the 16-days campaign. 45% of respondents from intervention group have heard the podcast "Gender ka Bavandar".

Overall, the enhanced engagement and effectiveness of women collectives in intervention areas demonstrate the significant positive impact of the MPMS program activities. The increased confidence, participation in governance, and active involvement in socio-economic and advocacy activities highlight the transformative effect of the interventions on women's empowerment in marginalized communities.

## **KEY FINDINGS FROM YOUNG WOMEN SEGMENT**

Majority of the respondents covered in the young women category follow Hinduism, with 93% in intervention areas and 95% in comparison areas. A significant portion belongs to Other Backward Classes (OBC), accounting for 57% in intervention areas and 45% in comparison areas, while Scheduled Castes (SC) make up 41% in intervention areas and 35% in comparison areas. Educational attainment shows that in UP, 39% of respondents in intervention areas have studied up to Higher Secondary, compared to 36% in comparison areas who have only studied up to Secondary school. In Bihar, 44% of respondents in both intervention and comparison areas have studied up to Higher Secondary. Marital status indicates that a large majority have never been married, with 97% in intervention areas and 95% in comparison areas. Bank account ownership is notably higher in intervention areas, with 83% in UP and 96% in Bihar, compared to 64% and 90% in comparison areas respectively. Occupation status shows that 23% of respondents in intervention areas are engaged in paid work, compared to 12% in comparison areas, with common occupations being private service, agricultural labor, and skilled labor/artisan.

Regarding support and capacity building, all respondents from intervention areas were aware of the MPMS program. In UP, 93.8% received complete support from family members to join the Young Women Collectives (YWC), and 84% in Bihar attended training or orientation sessions through the program. Key learnings from these sessions included youth leadership capacity, understanding body rights, choices consent and larger SRHR issues, creating an enabling environment for EWRs, women's health, gender norms, schemes related to women's development, and recognizing and addressing violence against women. 82% of the young respondents said they gained confidence to speak up due to these training sessions. Most of the respondents from Bihar (91%) mentioned that training sessions were organized within the GP while in UP, 58% mentioned within the GP, 50% at district HQ and 25% at block HQs.

98% Young women respondents from UP and 85% from Bihar attend the group meetings regularly or sometimes. While 90% of respondents in UP intervention areas and 48% in Bihar intervention areas attend joint interface meetings once a quarter or more often. Issues discussed during joint interface meetings include lack of access to health services, safety, access to education, and early marriage. In addressing women's rights issues, 58% of respondents from Intervention areas reported taking actions to benefit women and girls, such as meeting officials, participating in protests, organizing rallies, and supporting women and girls to receive benefits from government schemes. While only 16% from comparison areas mentioned taking any action that would specifically benefit girls and women.

Awareness of gender-based discrimination and violence is nearly universal in intervention group, with key understandings focused on less education for girls, early marriage, discrimination in food, nutrition & healthcare and restricted mobility for discrimination. However the awareness was 83% among comparison group. 65% of respondents from the intervention group (83%- UP; 57% Bihar) believe they have a role as YWC members in addressing gender-based discrimination and violence, emphasizing the importance of ensuring equal rights and ending discrimination for village development.

### **EFFICACY OF IMPACT CREATION INITIATIVES**

The 16-day campaign for inclusive feminism had high acknowledgment, with 57% awareness - 52% among EWRs awareness (79% - UP, 40%- Bihar); 59% among WC & YWC respondents (84% - UP, 49%- Bihar). The 16-day campaign was followed up by "Gender ka Bavandar" (largely meaning to create turmoil gender conversation) Podcast series for MPMS interventions. The series of podcasts included issue oriented community stories with overall awareness among 44% respondents. 38% of EWRs (53% in UP and 31% in Bihar), 45% women collective members (55% - UP, 41%- Bihar) and 49% among YWC category respondents (62% - UP, 44%- Bihar) had heard about these podcasts.

Key topics recalled by respondents included domestic violence (84%), gender-biased norms (73%), and the effects of violence on women's lives (59%). The podcasts were well-received, with 91% respondents feeling very good or good about it. The respondents mentioned that the podcasts was effective in mobilizing women (61%), enhancing understanding of women's rights (53%), and providing strategies to stop violence against women (61%). The series also helped in spreading awareness of domestic violence and violence against women - mentioned by 81% respondents. Topics like community perception of Gender Equality (49%) and intersectionality (43%) were also significantly recognized.

During qualitative discussions, respondents mentioned that other awareness generation initiatives included rallies, street plays, visual aids, and interactive sessions in schools, focusing on gender equality, domestic violence, and caste-based inequalities. Local stakeholders, including women, program staff, and community leaders, played a crucial role. The effectiveness of these campaigns was reflected in increased awareness and positive changes in societal attitudes. Respondents expressed gratitude for the information provided, previously unknown to them, indicating the campaign's success in filling knowledge gaps. Positive changes within communities were noted, with improved practices and behaviors resulting from the campaign. However, challenges like logistical issues requiring traveling to District/ Block HQs, receiving information/ materials in a timely manner, and difficulty in understanding certain sensitive topics were also mentioned.

Various stakeholders, from local authorities and community leaders to women and adolescent girls, participated in the campaign, highlighting its collaborative nature. Active participation in the 16-day campaign was noted, with respondents describing roles such as attending meetings, spreading awareness, and participating in rallies.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING OF IBTIDA NETWORK:**

1. Training Workshop:
  - CREA's comprehensive training on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and gender discrimination has empowered IBTIDA members to lead community initiatives such as workshops, rallies, and meetings.
  - CREA has also focused on enhancing administrative skills, enabling IBTIDA members to manage records, bookkeeping, and organizational logistics independently. This has improved their decision-making capabilities and empowered them to operate their organizations without external intervention.
2. Gender and rights-based approach
  - Furthermore, the program has made strides in promoting inclusion and intersectionality, incorporating marginalized groups such as widows, transgender individuals, physically and mentally challenged women, and commercial sex workers. This inclusive approach ensures a more holistic empowerment of the community.

- The program's advocacy platform, built on regular training on gender, sexuality, and rights, has enabled IBTIDA members to become effective community advocates. They engage in legal and social interventions to address violence and discrimination, providing essential support to victims and ensuring justice through counseling, legal action, and community mobilization.
- Active community engagement by IBTIDA members, through campaigns and discussions on critical issues, has fostered a supportive environment for women's empowerment.

### 3. Strengthening networking

- The program has also effectively built strong networks and collaborations among various organizations and stakeholders, enhancing their collective capacity to address issues more effectively and provide mutual support.

Resource constraints, such as difficulties in securing funding for travel and organizing meetings, have been highlighted by members.

Overall, the program has been effective in achieving its outcome of building the capacities of grassroots women-led organizations to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and strengthen networking between themselves. The positive impact on community engagement, leadership development, and advocacy efforts is evident, and addressing the highlighted challenges and implementing suggested improvements could further enhance its effectiveness.

### **MPMS EFFICACY (From Qualitative segment):**

Efforts to address women and community-related issues focused on raising awareness and providing knowledge about feminist leadership and SRHR education, healthcare, domestic violence, and economic opportunities. A significant emphasis was placed on educating adolescent girls about their rights and SRHR issues. Community involvement was crucial to ensure sustainable and culturally appropriate solutions. These efforts led to increased awareness among girls about their SRHR and gender rights, resulting in better demand for health services outcomes and empowerment. Male PRI members and Health Service Providers also collaborated with EWRs and Women Collectives to address women's rights and community issues, with examples of stopping child marriages and domestic violence.

Interface meetings in both states saw significant participation, providing platforms for adolescent girls, elected women representatives, and marginalized women groups to voice their concerns. These meetings facilitated discussions on issues of violence, early and forced marriages, the leadership issues of women, the access of education and health care services for women and young girls., the issues of safety and security of young girls etc. The frequency of these meetings was typically monthly, ensuring continuous engagement and effective governance. Challenges included ensuring consistent participation from all relevant stakeholders and follow-up on decisions made.

EWRs, supported by community backing from Women and Young Women collectives, faced significant challenges such as societal norms and gender biases. Despite these challenges, they successfully initiated and implemented community projects, leading to improvements in areas like education of girls, early and forced marriages, SRHR healthcare, and access to sanitation. Community perception varied, with some acknowledging their contributions, while traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes persisted, questioning their competence.



## **CONCLUSION**

The evaluation of the "Building Leadership of Women and Young Girls at Grassroots Level to Prevent Violence and Strengthen Rights of Women and Girls" project in UP and Bihar highlights significant progress in empowering women and girls.

### **Output 1:** Increased Knowledge, Capacity, and Skills of Women and Girls

1. Training and Awareness:
  - 85% of EWRs in intervention areas received training, boosting their confidence and awareness of domestic violence.
  - Awareness of gender-based discrimination and violence was 99% in intervention areas, significantly higher than in comparison areas.
2. Active Participation:
  - EWRs in intervention areas attended meetings more regularly (42% vs. 20% in comparison areas) and unaccompanied (49% vs. 23%).
  - Interface meetings allowed adolescent girls and marginalized women to voice their concerns effectively.
3. Campaign Impact:
  - The 16-day campaign and "Gender ka Bavandar" podcast enhanced advocacy skills, leading to 57% awareness among EWRs and 59% among women and young women collective members.

**Output 2:** To build capacities of Ibtiba Network organizations to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and to strengthen networking between themselves.

1. Training Workshop: CREA's comprehensive training on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and gender discrimination has empowered IBTIDA members to lead community initiatives such as workshops, rallies, and meetings. Additionally, CREA has focused on enhancing administrative skills, enabling IBTIDA members to independently manage records, bookkeeping, and organizational logistics, thereby improving their decision-making capabilities.
2. Gender and Rights-Based Approach: The program has made significant strides in promoting inclusion and intersectionality by incorporating marginalized groups such as widows, transgender individuals, physically and mentally challenged women, and commercial sex workers. This inclusive approach ensures holistic community empowerment. Regular training on gender, sexuality, and rights has enabled IBTIDA members to become effective community advocates. They engage in legal and social interventions to address violence and discrimination, providing essential support to victims and ensuring justice through counseling, legal action, and community mobilization. Active community engagement through campaigns and discussions on critical issues has fostered a supportive environment for women's empowerment.
3. Strengthening Networking: The program has successfully built strong networks and collaborations among various organizations and stakeholders, enhancing their collective capacity to address issues more effectively and provide mutual support.

Though, the program is successful, it faces resource constraints, such as difficulties in securing funding for travel and organizing meetings. Overall, the program has been effective in building the capacities of grassroots women-led organizations to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and strengthen networking between themselves. The positive impact on community engagement, leadership development, and advocacy efforts is evident.

### **Output 3:** Strengthened Capacity to Advocate for Rights and Advance SRHR and Girls' Education

#### 1. Capacity Building and Empowerment:

- EWRs in intervention areas were more active in supervising anganwadi centers (31% vs. 13%) and addressing domestic violence (33% vs. 8%).
- 58% of young women took actions to benefit women and girls, such as organizing rallies.

#### 2. Stakeholder Engagement:

- 60% of WC members from intervention groups met with EWRs quarterly, compared to 10% from comparison groups.
- Joint meetings with health service providers occurred quarterly for 62% of WC members in intervention groups, compared to 12% in comparison groups.

#### 3. Advocacy and Visibility:

- EWRs, WC, and YWC members actively engaged in protests, rallies, and supported women in accessing government benefits.
- Collaboration with male PRI members and health providers addressed community issues like child marriage and domestic violence.

Overall, the program significantly increased awareness, confidence, and active participation of women and girls in local governance, advocacy, and addressing gender-based violence.

### **Recommendations:**

#### 1. Continue and Strengthen Effective Efforts:

- **Training & Capacity Building:** Expand training to remote areas and localize sessions to reduce travel difficulties. Involve government officials to enhance support for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs).
- **Community Stakeholder Involvement:** Increase participation of diverse stakeholders, including male PRI members, local authorities, health service providers, and NGOs, through regular meetings.
- **Capacity Building for Young Women:** Strengthen efforts to build capacities of adolescent and young women, ensuring sustainability.

#### 2. Improving Reach:

- **Podcasts:** Enhance the reach of podcasts like "Gender ka Bavandar" with follow-up plans and listening circles to extend outreach beyond social media.
- **Interactive Elements:** Incorporate more interactive and practical sessions to boost participant engagement and understanding.

#### 3. Focusing on Sustainability:

- **Local Governance Participation:** Ensure issues impacting women and girls' rights are addressed in meetings and integrated into the micro-planning process at Gram Sabhas and other relevant platforms.
- **Structural Collaboration:** Work closely with block departments, health service providers, and schools to monitor and resolve gender-related issues structurally.

#### 4. Scaling Up the Program:

- **Integration with Training Institutes:** Integrate the capacity-building experience and manuals developed by CREA into trainings conducted by Panchayati Raj training institutes, with a focus on gender perspective.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The "Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti" program's third phase aims to empower Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in five districts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The program focuses on capacity building to enhance leadership, create safe public spaces for women and girls, and effectively address sexual and gender-based violence.

CREA has been committed to creating a gender-just world by supporting marginalized voices, particularly women marginalized by strengthening feminist leadership and education, the SRHR capacity, feminist movements, gender intersections of language, caste religion class and identity and addressing SGBV. The 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution, with its 33% reservation for women in Panchayats, provides a significant opportunity to address the leadership of the women in the rural community. The "Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti" (MPMS) program leverages this to build Elected Women Representatives' (EWRs) leadership, address gender and sexuality issues in Gram Sabhas, and create more spaces for women and girls in the panchayat planning process.

From the previous phases of MPMS, CREA along with its partner organisation has been able to create a strong pool of women's leadership in women collectives, EWRs, and young girls who are educated and aware about their rights and exercise their rights by dialogue and discussion with their immediate family members, peer groups and their community members. The program has also been able to push the agenda for building Feminist leadership through the network building of women's led organisations through supporting Ibtida. Through the past interventions, CREA has strengthened the capacities of partner organisations who are complementing the program on issues of Gender, Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Gender-Based Violence and various other Human Rights issues and gender intersectional issues. Two annual institutes on Feminist Leadership and Sexuality Gender and Rights over the year have also developed the capacity of the leadership and deepening the understanding of gender and sexuality for the leaders of the grass-root organisation and have nuanced the conversation to the feminist movement building process in the country.

From the past phases of MPMS implementation, CREA realized the need for spaces that facilitate discussions and discourses to explore and understand politics of Gender, Sexuality, norms and control related to bodies, choice, pleasure, consent, the assertion of the importance of Feminist Leadership. A strong need to constantly engage with the intersectional feminist lens by co-creating spaces for different movements and include issues related to Gender-based violence, SRHR choices of mobility and livelihood, climate change and gender was included in this phase.

Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti program was rolled out in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in 2015 (Phase I) by training over 2000 EWRs and 3000 women collective members on political systems, gender-based discrimination, rights, and violence. In phase II (2018), CREA continued its engagement with the local NGOs, EWRs and SHGs and it also invited HSPs to form collectives with the aim to support and advance the SRHR of women and girls. In April 2020 (Phase III), 50 Gram Panchayats across selected blocks of Bareilly and Mahoba districts in UP and Vaishali, Muzaffarpur and Patna in Bihar were covered. Capacities of adolescent girls and young women were developed through direct interactions and capacity building sessions. New cohort of EWRs elected during the Panchayat elections (2021) were included. The initiative reached out to 3000 women including EWRs, Women leaders from collectives and adolescent & young women. Apart from women, the program aimed to reach out to HSPs, Male PRI members and community stakeholders.

The program also aimed to strengthen grassroots organizations and foster collaboration with various stakeholders to address gender inequalities. By enhancing the roles of women in Panchayats, the program aims to shift traditional roles and empower women to exercise real power in local governance.

The logical framework approach was adopted to achieve the outcome that “Women and girls are the architects of a society free from violence, and lead political and social transformation to redefine, prevent and eliminate sexual and gender based violence.” The specific objective set for this phase was to “Build a sustainable and inclusive grassroots women’s movement/ leaders and organisations in India (UP and Bihar) to strengthen participation in political processes and advocate for addressing SGBV”. The outputs defined for the program are as below:

**Output 1:** Increased knowledge, capacity and skills of women and girls to raise issues in their communities/public forums related to gender based violence; early and forced marriage; safety etc.)

**Output 2:** To build capacities of grassroots women-led organisations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and to strengthen networking between themselves. (Ibtida)

**Output 3:** Strengthened capacity to articulate supportive environment in the communities to raise the women collectives demand, access and advocate for their rights and visibility and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and address girls education with the health, education and political institutions of the communities

CREA's activities under MPMS Phase III mentioned by Program team during qualitative discussions can be summarized as follows:

- Community Mobilization and Awareness: Strengthened interaction with women's collectives and EWRs (Elected Women Representatives) at the village level through community mobilizers. This involved various communication methods to build rapport and awareness about the program.
- Capacity Building Workshops: Conducted workshops for EWRs on leadership and local governance, focusing on governance, gender, power, patriarchy, financial literacy, decision-making, climate and gender issues, and eco-feminism.
- Community Mobilizers Training: Created a pool of community mobilizers trained in gender, rights, governance, feminist leadership, sexuality, advocacy, and participatory approaches. These mobilizers will engage regularly with women and girls in the community.
- Regular Meetings with Women's Collectives: Quarterly meetings with women's collectives on gender, rights, and governance to create a supportive environment for EWRs.
- Training Young Women: Engaged young women in formal training on gender, sexuality, violence against women (VAW), SRH (sexual and reproductive health), and human rights. These trainings aimed to prepare young women for leadership roles.
- Institute Participation: Ensured participation of trainers from partner organizations in CREA's institutes on gender, sexuality (SGRI) and feminist leadership, movement building (FLMBARI) , and rights to enhance their understanding and implementation of these concepts.
- Leadership Academy: Conducted leadership academies for young women, preparing them as leaders with political aspirations in their communities.
- Interface Meetings: Organized quarterly interface meetings between women's collectives and adolescent girls to strengthen relationships, identify issues, and discuss power dynamics, patriarchy, and gender-based violence.
- Program Planning Orientation: Oriented community mobilizers on overall program planning and conducted annual review meetings to discuss challenges and feedback.
- Engagement with Partner Organizations: Identified new women-led organizations for the Ibtida Network and built their capacities through various training sessions focused on organizational development, rights of marginalized women, and climate and gender issues.
- Fellowships and Advocacy: Provided fellowships to Ibtida members for community meetings and participation in national-level meetings, advocating for gender and rights issues at community level and follow up planning with the community they work with.
- School Engagement: Conducted interactive sessions with school students to spread awareness about their rights and encourage them to negotiate for their needs.
- Public Campaigns: Organized campaigns and public events to increase visibility of issues related to gender-based violence and leadership of EWRs, including online campaigns and community events.

- Eco-Feminism Meetings: Held meetings to build understanding and strategies around eco-feminism, led by young girls trained in the leadership academy in the community with members of women collective and EWRs.

The program Manager expressed that the experience from previous phases and the presence at grassroots level provided CREA an edge to implement the new phase. All the community mobilizers were oriented on this phase of the program. The strategies are broken down into activities which are planned along with the team and community mobilizers. These plans and progress are reviewed every month during monthly review meetings.

The key challenges they faced was that the cohort of EWRs was a completely new cohort as they were newly elected through the Panchayat Elections. However, they strategically utilized their capacity building efforts invested among the old cohort of EWRs during the previous phases. The old EWRs were encouraged to form Women Collectives and provide local guidance & support to the new cohort of EWRs.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quasi-experimental mixed methods design to evaluate the difference between intervention and comparison arms. The study had two components (1) Quantitative and (2) Qualitative.

The Quantitative component has two arms (1) Intervention Arm and (2) Comparison Arm. Wherein, the intervention arm consists of the EWRs, Women Leaders and Adolescent & young women from the program coverage list and comparison group consisted of EWRs, Women Leaders and Adolescent & young women from similar geographies but not covered by the MPMS program.

The qualitative component adopts Focus group discussions and in-depth interviewing methods with EWRs, Women Leaders, Adolescent & young girls, HSPs, PRI members, Trained Ibtida organization members and program coordinators. It was designed to capture the perceived contributions made by the program.

The sample size (n) for quantitative component was calculated using Cochran's Sample Size Formula for finite population.

$n =$  Sample size for unlimited population

$n' =$  the sample size

$N =$  Population size

$\mathcal{E} =$  Margin of error

$p =$  population proportion assumed to be 0.05 for optimal sample size

$$\text{Unlimited population: } n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2}$$

$$\text{Finite population: } n' = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\epsilon^2 N}}$$

Based upon the above estimation, the sample size calculated as 150 each for EWRs, Women Leaders and Adolescent & Young Girls from Intervention arm and 100 each from comparison arm would yield results at MoE between 6% to 10% at 95% Confidence Interval. The sample was covered proportionately from all 7 intervention blocks across the 5 districts of UP & Bihar– Bareilly, Mahoba, Muzzaffarpur, Vaishali and Patna. For the comparison arm, GPs not covered by MPMS program from the same blocks were considered.

For qualitative component, from each intervention block - 1 Case study for EWR, 1 Focus Group Discussions among Women Leaders and Adolescent & Young Girls each, 1 IDI with HSP and 1 IDI with PRI members was conducted. In addition, 1 trained member from all 11 Ibtida organizations and 1 program staff from each state were interviewed for qualitative component.

|                                   | Quantitative |            | Qualitative – Intervention Arm |                             |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                   | Intervention | Comparison | Criteria                       | Total                       |
| <b>EWR</b>                        | 157          | 100        | 1 IDI study per block          | 7                           |
| <b>WL</b>                         | 182          | 105        | 1 FGD per block                | 7                           |
| <b>AG</b>                         | 176          | 104        | 1 FGD per block                | 7                           |
| <b>HSPs</b>                       |              |            | 1 IDI per block                | 7                           |
| <b>PRI Members</b>                |              |            | 1 IDIs per block               | 7                           |
| <b>Ibtida member organization</b> |              |            | 1 IDI per organization         | 11                          |
| <b>Program Staff</b>              |              |            | 1 per state                    | 2                           |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>450</b>   | <b>300</b> |                                | <b>48 (10 Case Studies)</b> |

Table 1: Sample Distribution

## 2.2 Implementation Plan

### Preparatory activities

The questionnaires were prepared to include all logframe indicators and the areas considered in the theory of change designed for the program. The discussion guides for the qualitative component were prepared based on the program elements for understanding the contribution of each element.

The tools were translated in Hindi language. The questionnaire was programmed for CAPI (using Survey CTO) and the programmed tool was pre-tested with 2 EWRs and 2 members of Women Collectives.

### Ethical considerations during data collection

- Informed consent was sought from all respondents
- The data collection team was trained on all ethical protocols and requirements including confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation.
- Female interviewers and moderators were engaged for the survey so that the participants are at ease and comfortable to talk about sensitive issues such as gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence.



### Data Collection

In person data collection method was adopted for the study. Four teams of 4 female interviewers and one supervisor was engaged for quantitative data collection. One experienced moderator & 1 senior interviewer for FGDs and IDIs was engaged for qualitative component. All FGDs & IDIs were audio recorded and later transcribed in English for analysis.

The team adept at conducting studies in the study area and fluent in the local dialect were identified for this study. The team was oriented through virtual platforms for 3 days followed by 1 day for field practice and debrief.

### Quality Assurance



Three levels of Quality checks were adopted:

1. 1 interview of each interviewer was accompanied by the field coordinator and supervisor and feedback was given to each interviewer on day one itself.
2. Supervisors accompanied the 10% interviews of each interviewer and provided feedback to them
3. Supervisors back checked 10% interviews and verified the responses

## 2.3 Data processing & Analysis

The data collected through CAPI was downloaded and cleaned for anomalies. Basic cross tabulation of information areas captured across intervention and control arm by district was analyzed using SPSS 25.0, statistical software. Chi-square was calculated to test the significance of the difference in proportions from intervention and control areas. Wherever the value of chi-square is more than 3.84 it is shaded with light pink colour, it indicates that the difference between intervention and control arm values is statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

Coding & analysis for qualitative data was done using a content analysis method. Evidence collected from ground for the case studies were validated.

Data security and protection was ensured by storing it in password protected devices and locked cabinets with access only to researchers involved in this study. Data was de-identified before analysis. Each respondent was given a code, and the same code was used for questionnaire and consent records and documents to protect the respondent's confidentiality. Identification details and de-identified datasets was stored separately.

### 3. KEY FINDINGS FROM EWR SEGMENT

The key findings from the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) segment are given below:

#### 1. Socio-Demographic Profile:

EWRs covered predominantly followed Hinduism with significantly higher Muslim population among UP Intervention areas (21%). Among EWRs surveyed, Uttar Pradesh has a higher proportion of Scheduled Castes (51%) than Bihar (28%). Bihar has a higher proportion of Other Backward Classes (60%) than Uttar Pradesh (43%).

| -                    | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Base</b>          | <b>157</b>   | <b>100</b>    | <b>47</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>75</b>   |
| Hindu                | 87.9%        | 96.0%         | 78.7%     | 100.0%    | 91.8%      | 94.7%       |
| Islam                | 12.1%        | 4.0%          | 21.3%     | 0.0%      | 8.2%       | 5.3%        |
|                      |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| Scheduled Caste      | 35.0%        | 37.0%         | 51.1%     | 40.0%     | 28.2%      | 36.0%       |
| Scheduled Tribe      | 1.3%         | 2.0%          | 0.0%      | 4.0%      | 1.8%       | 1.3%        |
| General              | 8.9%         | 18.0%         | 6.4%      | 12.0%     | 10.0%      | 20.0%       |
| Other Backward Class | 54.8%        | 43.0%         | 42.6%     | 44.0%     | 60.0%      | 42.7%       |

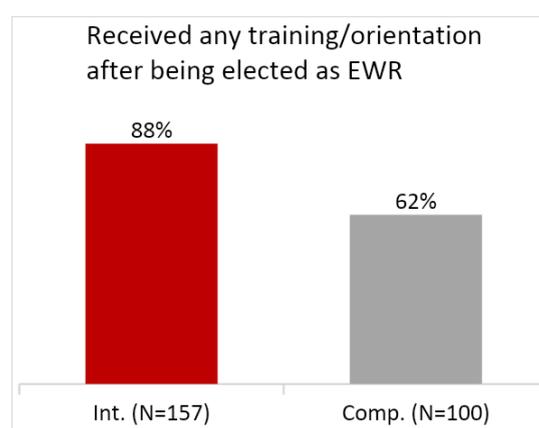
Table 2: Religion & Caste Category

The majority of EWRs are married across all groups. Nuclear families are more prevalent in intervention groups (62% Int., 34% Comp.). Literacy levels among EWRs from the comparison group is higher than that of the Intervention group. Proportion of Non-literate or literate with informal education was 34% among the intervention group and 21% among the comparison group. Within the intervention group, in UP this proportion was 54% and 25% in Bihar. Across the groups, 26%-28% EWRs were engaged in paid work. In Uttar Pradesh, 36% of EWRs in the intervention group were engaged in additional paid work compared to 25% in Bihar. Agricultural labor is more common in Uttar Pradesh (35%) than in Bihar (7%). All individuals have bank accounts. In the intervention groups, 98% have single accounts, and 85% manage their accounts themselves.

The intervention groups have a higher proportion of individuals elected multiple times. Intervention groups show more varied electoral participation, with 51% contesting two or more elections as compared to 42% from the comparison group. 36% from the Intervention group and 16% from the comparison group contested for elections to bring more issues of women and young women in the Gram Panchayat planning process. The Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti program is a significant motivator in Uttar Pradesh (60%- UP Int, 9%- Bihar Int.).

#### 2. Training & Capacity Building:

88% EWRs from the intervention group and 62% from the comparison group received any training/orientation after being elected as EWR. Training and capacity building being one of the core interventions under MPMS, the majority of EWRs from intervention areas who received training were from the MPMS program, with 91% and from Govt./ SIRD with 56%. While in comparison most of the EWRs (93%) who received training received from Govt./ SIRD.

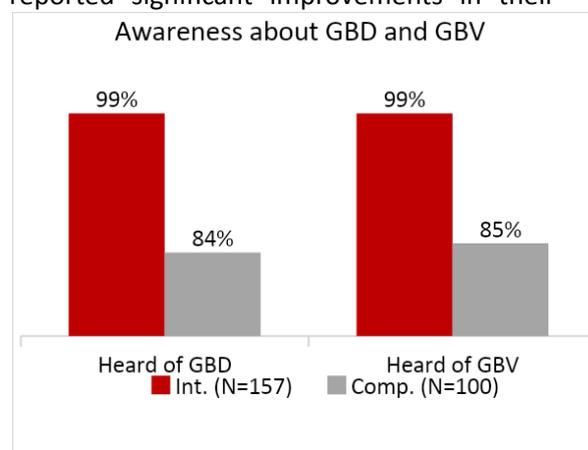


The higher proportion of EWRs who attended training from the intervention group than the comparison group learnt about issues of Gender, Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, Gender-Based Violence and various other Human Rights issues and gender intersectional issues.

| <b>Learnings from Training</b>                                     | <b>Int.</b> | <b>Comp.</b> |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| <i>Base (Who received Training)</i>                                | <b>142</b>  | <b>64</b>    |
| Roles and responsibilities of panchayat members                    | 65.5%       | 73.4%        |
| Understanding and monitoring of rural development programs/schemes | 48.6%       | 32.8%        |
| Women's health/importance of being healthy                         | 47.2%       | 15.6%        |
| Recognize and address violence against women e.g. DV               | 45.8%       | 6.3%         |
| Schemes related to women and girl's development and empowerment    | 44.4%       | 10.9%        |
| Early marriage, dowry  | 37.3%       | 4.7%         |
| What is Gender norms, patriarchy and power                         | 36.6%       | 1.6%         |
| Preparation of village action plans                                | 35.9%       | 34.4%        |
| Laws for violence against women                                    | 31.7%       | 3.1%         |
| 3 tiers system of panchayat  | 30.3%       | 45.3%        |
| Feminist leadership  | 27.5%       | 4.7%         |
| Women's participation in Gram Sabha meetings                       | 26.8%       | 12.5%        |
| Body and sexuality   | 18.3%       | 3.1%         |
| Law against sexual harassment at workplace                         | 12.7%       | 1.6%         |
| Climate Change and its impact on women                             | 8.5%        | 6.3%         |

Table 3: Key learnings from the training/ orientation programs attended

The training has been effective in increasing the confidence of EWRs from the intervention group to address issues related to gender-based violence and governance. 82% of EWRs stated they feel more confident in their roles after the training. EWRs reported significant improvements in their knowledge and skills, with many highlighting that they now better understand their roles and responsibilities. A significant proportion of EWRs in intervention areas are aware of and understand issues related to gender-based discrimination (GBD) and gender-based violence (GBV). In intervention areas, 79% of EWRs reported awareness and understanding of GBD and GBV, compared to 41% in comparison areas. EWRs have gained knowledge on recognizing and addressing domestic violence and other forms of GBV. In UP, 85% of EWRs in intervention areas are familiar with these issues, compared to 52% in comparison areas.



### 3. Quality of Participation in local governance:

EWRs in intervention areas attend meetings more regularly and are more often unaccompanied by husbands compared to comparison areas.

- Majority of EWRs reported complete support from their families to contest elections, with 96% in both intervention and comparison areas.
- As mentioned in the table on learning from training, more EWRs from the intervention group learnt about the importance of participation in Gram Sabha meetings (27%-Int., 12%-Comp.). Thus, EWRs in intervention areas attend GS meetings more regularly (42%-Int., 20%-Comp.).

|  | <b>Overall Int.</b> | <b>Overall Comp.</b> | <b>UP Int.</b> | <b>UP Comp.</b> | <b>Bihar Int.</b> | <b>Bihar Comp.</b> |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|  |                     |                      |                |                 |                   |                    |

| Total   | 123   | 82    | 46    | 22    | 77    | 60    |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Regularly   | 41.5% | 19.5% | 45.7% | 18.2% | 39.0% | 20.0% |
| Sometime  | 46.3% | 37.8% | 50.0% | 40.9% | 44.2% | 36.7% |
| Rarely  | 10.6% | 39.0% | 4.3%  | 40.9% | 14.3% | 38.3% |
| Did not attend any meeting/ No meeting took place | 1.6%  | 3.7%  | 0.0%  | 0.0%  | 2.6%  | 5.0%  |

Table 4: Frequency of attending Gram Sabha/ Khuli Baithak

- c. Unaccompanied or Female Accompaniment: A larger proportion of EWRs in intervention areas attend meetings alone. In UP, 45% of EWRs attend meetings alone compared to 32% in comparison areas. In Bihar, 51% attend alone compared to 20% in comparison areas. The data also shows that a substantial percentage of EWRs in comparison areas are accompanied by their husbands: 56% in UP and 59% in Bihar, whereas this figure is significantly lower in intervention areas (11% in UP and 29% in Bihar). As the program tried to remove the tokenistic leadership of EWRs through creating an enabling environment from family members , peer groups and community members , the participation in the meeting as independent leader has been a crucial intervention to establish the EWRs identity in the area.
- d. As a result of the focus in the MPMS program to bring the male PRI members into conversation with EWRs during PRI meetings to support and create an enabling environment for the leadership of EWRs, in intervention areas, meetings with other male PRI members and Mukhiyas are more frequent. In Uttar Pradesh (UP), 34% of EWRs reported meeting with male PRI members and Mukhiyas, compared to 20% in comparison areas. Similarly, in Bihar, 29% of EWRs in intervention areas reported frequent meetings compared to 21% in comparison areas
- e. EWRs in intervention areas also reported more frequent meetings with block-level, district-level, and higher government officials. In intervention areas, 7% of EWRs reported often meeting with higher officials compared to 2% in comparison areas.

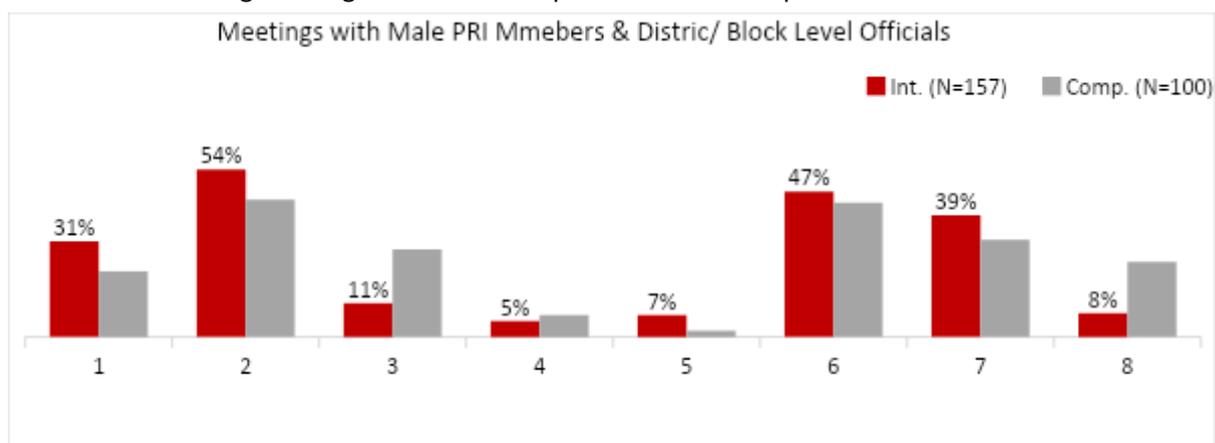


Figure 4: Meeting with other PRI Members and block level/ district level higher government officials

These points illustrate the higher quality of participation in terms of regular meeting attendance and independence among EWRs in intervention areas, supported by the structured engagement and supportive environment fostered by the intervention programs. This shows that the regular meetings with the government officials and people holding institutional positions have been intentionally involved in the program participation, creating a space for local advocacy of the issues that are

prepared in the action plan meetings in the community and creating more accountability in the system.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities as EWR:

EWRs in intervention areas are more involved in activities, such as Organizing Gram Sabha's and solving village issues (44%-Int.; 27%- Comp.); Supervising the Anganwadi for improving nutrition status of women and girls (31%-Int.; 13%- Comp.); Give benefit to women / young girls in all fields/ women's development (33%-Int.; 8%- Comp.); Work on resolving/supporting cases of DV/VAW and gender discrimination/ take up cases 33%-Int.; 8%- Comp.); Prevent child marriage (26%-Int.; 3%-Comp.); Generate awareness about climate change and its impact on women (17%-Int.; 7%- Comp.).

However, EWRs from comparison areas focus more on other developmental activities such as Shauchalay Nirmaan (toilet construction), Chapakal (Handpump) installation, road construction etc. (75%-Int.; 84%- Comp.) and dissemination of Government Schemes (52%-Int.; 54%- Comp.).

|   | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|---|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>157</b>   | <b>100</b>    | <b>47</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>75</b>   |
| Planning/implementing/monitoring developmental activities,                        | 74.5%        | 84.0%         | 95.7%     | 76.0%     | 65.5%      | 86.7%       |
| Dissemination of government schemes   | 51.6%        | 54.0%         | 74.5%     | 40.0%     | 41.8%      | 58.7%       |
| Organizing Gram Sabha's and solving village issues                                | 43.9%        | 27.0%         | 46.8%     | 28.0%     | 42.7%      | 26.7%       |
| Work on resolving/supporting cases of DV/VAW and gender discrimination            | 33.1%        | 8.0%          | 27.7%     | 12.0%     | 35.5%      | 6.7%        |
| Give benefit to women / young girls in all fields/ women's development/help women | 32.5%        | 8.0%          | 34.0%     | 12.0%     | 31.8%      | 6.7%        |
| Supervising the anganwadi for improving nutrition status of women and girls       | 30.6%        | 13.0%         | 40.4%     | 16.0%     | 26.4%      | 12.0%       |
| Prevent child marriage  | 26.1%        | 3.0%          | 12.8%     | 4.0%      | 31.8%      | 2.7%        |
| Making sure girls get education   | 21.7%        | 3.0%          | 21.3%     | 8.0%      | 21.8%      | 1.3%        |
| Generate awareness about climate change and its impact on women                   | 16.6%        | 7.0%          | 19.1%     | 4.0%      | 15.5%      | 8.0%        |
| Maintaining law and order   | 12.7%        | 6.0%          | 14.9%     | 12.0%     | 11.8%      | 4.0%        |

Table 5: Roles and responsibilities as a EWR

#### 5. Interface Meetings

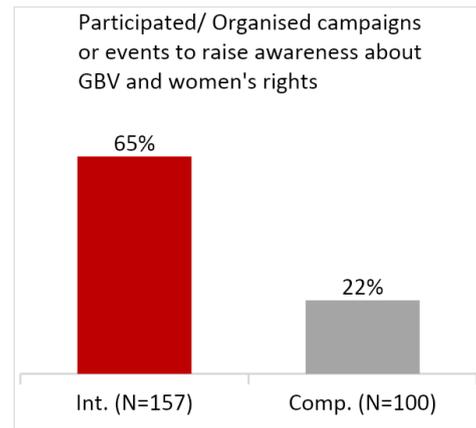
- a. Interface meetings between EWRs and various stakeholders, such as women collectives (More than once a quarter - 19%- Int; 3%- Comp.), Young Girls (More than once a quarter - 17%- Int; 1%- Comp.) and health service providers (HSPs), ASHA, ANM, and AWW (More than once a quarter - 16%- Int; 2%- Comp.), are more frequent in intervention areas.

| Meetings with women collectives                         | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|---|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>157</b>   | <b>100</b>    | <b>47</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>75</b>   |
| More often than once a quarter                          | 19.1%        | 3.0%          | 31.9%     | 4.0%      | 13.6%      | 2.7%        |
| Once a quarter  | 52.2%        | 6.0%          | 53.2%     | 0.0%      | 51.8%      | 8.0%        |
| Less often  | 16.6%        | 26.0%         | 12.8%     | 60.0%     | 18.2%      | 14.7%       |
| Don't know/Can't say                                    | 12.1%        | 65.0%         | 2.1%      | 36.0%     | 16.4%      | 74.7%       |
| <b>Meetings with Young Girls and their caregivers</b>   |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| More often than once a quarter                          | 17.2%        | 1.0%          | 29.8%     | 0.0%      | 11.8%      | 1.3%        |
| Once a quarter  | 44.6%        | 8.0%          | 55.3%     | 8.0%      | 40.0%      | 8.0%        |
| Less often  | 22.3%        | 24.0%         | 10.6%     | 52.0%     | 27.3%      | 14.7%       |
| Don't know/Can't say                                    | 15.9%        | 67.0%         | 4.3%      | 40.0%     | 20.9%      | 76.0%       |
| <b>Meetings with Young Girls and Healthcare workers</b> |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| More often than once a quarter                          | 15.9%        | 2.0%          | 25.5%     | 0.0%      | 11.8%      | 2.7%        |
| Once a quarter  | 45.9%        | 5.0%          | 63.8%     | 4.0%      | 38.2%      | 5.3%        |
| Less often  | 24.2%        | 21.0%         | 10.6%     | 44.0%     | 30.0%      | 13.3%       |
| Don't know/Can't say                                    | 14.0%        | 72.0%         | 0.0%      | 52.0%     | 20.0%      | 78.7%       |

Table 6: Interface meetings

- b. These meetings have led to collaborative efforts with the community. 87% of EWRs from the Intervention group received support from Women Collectives in carrying out their work and 83% from Young Girls & women. While only 30% & 28% EWRs from the comparison group received support from Women Collectives and Young Girls & Women from their community. They support EWRs by participating in panchayat level meetings and raising issues of women and girls, organize a rally / campaign for women and girls' rights and providing encouragement.
- c. These meetings have significantly improved their understanding of issues faced by the community girls and women. Eg. access related issues to information related to SRHR (40%- Int.; 22%- Comp.) and access to health-related services (51%- Int.; 26%- Comp.).

d. The interface meetings have also enhanced participation and advocacy efforts. Many EWRs have taken on leadership roles in their communities, actively participating in campaigns and organizing events to raise awareness about GBV and women's rights. 65% of EWRs in intervention areas are involved in such activities compared to 22% in comparison areas



e. During qualitative discussions it was mentioned by EWRs that women leaders often rely on community support to navigate their roles effectively. Support systems mentioned include mentoring from senior leaders and collaboration with peers. Many women leaders face significant challenges, including societal norms and gender biases that undermine their authority and capabilities. They face struggles with gaining respect and recognition from male counterparts and community members. Structural barriers, such as lack of resources and institutional support, are also prevalent, making it difficult for women to perform their roles effectively. However, the community's backing in intervention areas empowered them to take decisive actions and implement changes.

*“Adolescent girls sometimes raise issues like condition of their school as there is no facility of toilet or facility of water or there is no facility of benches to sit.... We get it approved with the principal of the school because panchayat don't get enough fund for the schools” – PRI Male, Bihar*

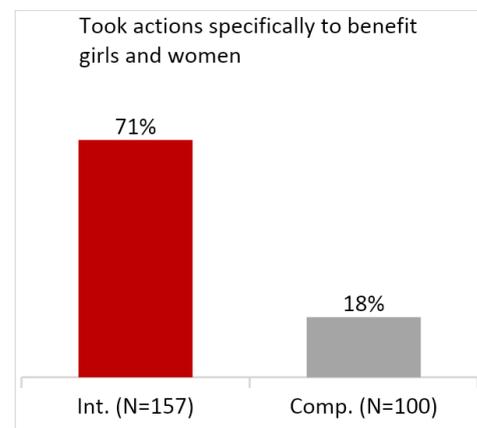
## 6. Understanding and Addressing GBD and GBV

The findings demonstrate that EWRs in intervention areas are significantly more active and effective in a variety of roles and responsibilities compared to their counterparts in comparison areas, particularly in developmental activities, dissemination of government schemes, organizing community meetings, addressing education and health issues, and tackling gender-based violence and discrimination.

Ensuring girls get education as their role as EWR is more prominent in intervention areas, with 21% in UP and 22% in Bihar, much higher than 8% and 1% in their respective comparison areas. Addressing domestic violence and gender discrimination as their role is also more prevalent in intervention areas, with 28% in UP and 36% in Bihar, significantly higher than 12% and 7% in comparison areas. Preventing child marriage shows a stark contrast, particularly in Bihar, where 32% of intervention EWRs are involved compared to just 3% in comparison areas. In UP, the figures are 13% in intervention areas versus 4% in comparison areas. One such incident from qualitative discussions is given below.

*“A minor girl was getting married. She was around 14-15 years of age. We came to know about it through EWR. We spread the information. We went there with them. Moreover, administration was also informed. Through ‘meri panchayat meri shakti, everyone went there. People were made to understand over there. After a while, the wedding was averted.” – PRI Male, Bihar*

In overall intervention areas, 71% of EWRs reported taking actions specifically to benefit girls and women compared to only 18% in comparison areas. This includes actions like collecting evidence on the status of services for adolescent girls in anganwadi



centers and advocating at the district level. Supervision of anganwadi centers for improving nutrition among women and girls sees 40% engagement in UP intervention areas and 26% in Bihar intervention areas, notably higher than their comparison counterparts (16% in UP and 12% in Bihar). Other such actions included “Organized meetings with local SHG groups on domestic violence against women (43%-Int.; 11% - Comp.)”; “Organized a rally to sensitize the community on violence against women (35%-Int; 6%-Comp.), “Collecting evidence on functioning of protection officers and did advocacy at district level (36%-Int; 22%-Comp.)” and “Met with Block and district level officials and persuaded them to take action on trafficking of young girls (35% - Int.;22%-Comp.)”.

| <b>Taken actions to specifically benefit girls and women</b>   | <b>Overall Int.</b> | <b>Overall Comp.</b> | <b>UP Int.</b> | <b>UP Comp</b> | <b>Bihar Int</b> | <b>Bihar Comp</b> |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>111</b>          | <b>18</b>            | <b>27</b>      | <b>9</b>       | <b>84</b>        | <b>9</b>          |
| Collected evidence on the status of services for adolescent girls in anganwadi centers to do advocacy at block/ district level | 60.4%               | 33.3%                | 70.4 %         |                | 57.1 %           |                   |
| Organized meetings with local SHG groups on domestic violence against women  | 43.2%               | 11.1%                | 66.7 %         |                | 35.7 %           |                   |
| Collected evidence on functioning of protection officers and did advocacy at district level                                    | 36.0%               | 22.2%                | 63.0 %         |                | 27.4 %           |                   |
| Met with Block and district level officials to take action on trafficking of young girls                                       | 35.1%               | 22.2%                | 66.7 %         |                | 25.0 %           |                   |
| Organized a rally to sensitize the community on violence against women   | 35.1%               | 5.6%                 | 55.6 %         |                | 28.6 %           |                   |
| Got Widow pension scheme passed for women  | 34.2%               | 33.3%                | 33.3 %         |                | 34.5 %           |                   |
| Got Indira Awaas Yojana passed for women   | 26.1%               | 5.6%                 | 29.6 %         |                | 25.0 %           |                   |
| Got hand pumps fitted in the community   | 18.9%               | 11.1%                | 22.2 %         |                | 17.9 %           |                   |
| Got other schemes passed for women and girls   | 16.2%               | 16.7%                | 29.6 %         |                | 11.9 %           |                   |
| Supported the woman in going to the local police to register a case against domestic violence                                  | 16.2%               | 5.6%                 | 25.9 %         |                | 13.1 %           |                   |
| Started processes of filing applications for various schemes for women and girls   | 15.3%               | 0.0%                 | 40.7 %         |                | 7.1%             |                   |

Table 7: Taken actions to specifically benefit girls and women

Monitoring and Supervision of ASHA/ANM Activities: In UP, 55% of EWRs in intervention areas are involved in monitoring ASHA and ANM activities compared to 28% in comparison areas. In Bihar, the figures are 35% in intervention areas compared to 16% in comparison areas.

There was mention of successful conflict resolution and community mobilization efforts led by women leaders during qualitative discussions. The community does acknowledge the unique contributions of women leaders, appreciating their empathy, communication skills, and dedication. Women leaders are often seen as more approachable and trustworthy, leading to stronger community bonds and cooperative efforts. Many women leaders shared personal stories of empowerment and growth, highlighting how leadership roles have helped them develop confidence and skills. These experiences often serve as inspiration for other women in the community, encouraging them to pursue leadership positions. Personal narratives reveal emotional and psychological challenges, including feelings of isolation, stress, and frustration due to constant scrutiny and opposition. Women leaders often balance multiple roles, managing household responsibilities alongside their leadership duties, leading to burnout and exhaustion.

*“Till last year, the ladies' washroom was locked. Only the boys' washroom was functional. Then I went there and met Sir. I told him that when the girls have their periods and if the washroom is not open, then where would the girls keep their pads,*

where will they go. Will they go out? Why do you keep it locked? We keep it closed because the seat etc is not good. I told him to get it repaired. If the child does not come to school, then you call the child's home and say that he/she has not come. But do you ever ask what the problem with the child is. So now there is a box kept. The girl will keep her pads in it. And that washroom has been made functional." – EWR, Bihar

#### 4. KEY FINDINGS FROM WOMEN COLLECTIVE SEGMENT

##### 1. Basic Profile and Background

While among the intervention group, 93% identified themselves as members of MPMS Women collective, others mentioned as part of Jeevika or other SHGs. Among the comparison group, 84% were members of Jeevika and others were members of other SHGs.

|              | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>182</b>   | <b>105</b>    | <b>55</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>127</b> | <b>70</b>   |
| MPMS WC      | 92.9%        | 0.0%          | 83.6%     | 0.0%      | 96.9%      | 0.0%        |
| Jeevika      | 72.5%        | 83.8%         | 40.0%     | 54.3%     | 86.6%      | 98.6%       |
| Other SHG    | 12.1%        | 14.3%         | 27.3%     | 40.0%     | 5.5%       | 1.4%        |
| Other        | 0.0%         | 2.9%          | 0.0%      | 5.7%      | 0.0%       | 1.4%        |

Table 8: Women Collective Profile

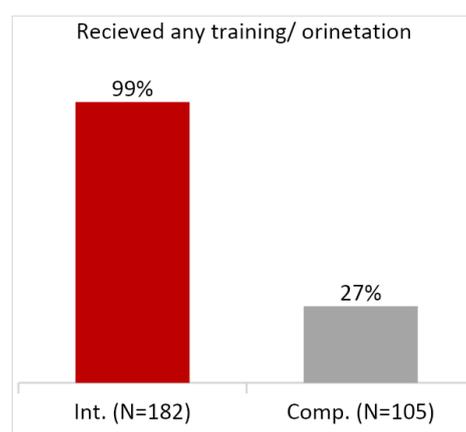
A significant portion of these women come from marginalized communities, with 35% belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and 54.8% to Other Backward Classes (OBC). The religious composition reflects a mix, with a majority being Hindu (78.7% in UP and 91.8% in Bihar) and a considerable number being Muslim (21.3% in UP and 8.2% in Bihar).

About 21% of the women are non-literate, while 12.7% have literacy without formal education. Primary education is achieved by 15.3%, and a noteworthy 17.2% have reached secondary education levels. Most women in the collectives are married (91.7%), and they primarily live in nuclear families (62.4%), though a significant proportion (36.3%) are part of joint families.

Economically, 28% of the women are engaged in paid work, reflecting their active contribution to their household incomes. The types of work they engage in are diverse, with 18.2% involved in agricultural labor, another 18.2% in skilled labor or artisan work, 20.5% in private service, and a notable 29.5% running their own businesses.

##### 2. Support and Capacity Building:

Almost all of them from the intervention group mentioned they attended training programs and orientation sessions organized by MPMS, while only 27% from the comparison group attended any kind of training. Women collectives have received considerable support and capacity-building training. In intervention areas, More than 64% of women in intervention areas learned about violence against women, domestic violence, schemes related to women and girl's development and empowerment, early marriage & dowry through these sessions. Training sessions have been highly effective, with 85% of participants feeling more confident in speaking in public and 82% of participants stating that they feel more confident in addressing issues related to gender-based violence and advocating for their rights.



##### 3. Participation and Engagement:

The participation rate of women in Gram Sabha/ Khuli Baithak meetings is significantly higher in intervention areas, with 60% of women collective members from intervention group and 38% from Comparison group regularly or sometimes participating in Gram Sabha/ Khuli Baithak

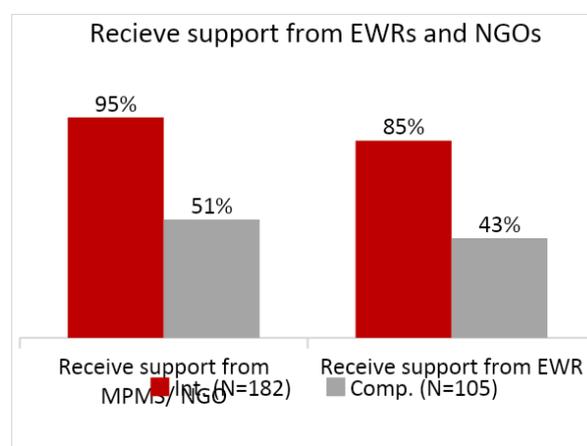
meetings. Regular participation in Women Collective meetings is reported by 55% in the intervention group and 48% in the comparison group.

The intervention groups are more active in discussing a broad range of issues that affect women, such as Education of women, young girls and children (80%-Int.; 15%-Comp.); Address cases of VAW (78%-Int.; 3%-Comp.) and Issues pertaining to women's health and sanitation (65%-Int.; 30%-Comp.) is more during meetings among Women collectives from intervention group than comparison group.

|   | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|---|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>104</b>   | <b>69</b>     | <b>42</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>62</b>  | <b>39</b>   |
| Education of women, young girls and children                          | 79.8%        | 14.5%         | 85.7%     | 20.0%     | 75.8%      | 10.3%       |
| Address cases of VAW  | 77.9%        | 2.9%          | 71.4%     | 3.3%      | 82.3%      | 2.6%        |
| Issues pertaining to women's health and sanitation                    | 65.4%        | 30.4%         | 69.0%     | 33.3%     | 62.9%      | 28.2%       |
| How to help other women financially                                   | 54.8%        | 36.2%         | 42.9%     | 23.3%     | 62.9%      | 46.2%       |
| How to be financially independent                                     | 33.7%        | 24.6%         | 31.0%     | 20.0%     | 35.5%      | 28.2%       |
| Mobilize people's participation                                       | 19.2%        | 8.7%          | 14.3%     | 3.3%      | 22.6%      | 12.8%       |
| How to collaboratively work with other women leaders of the community | 18.3%        | 0.0%          | 23.8%     | 0.0%      | 14.5%      | 0.0%        |

Table 9: Issues discussed in WC meetings

Respondents in intervention area were asked ever since they joined WC, EWRs, MPMS or other NGOs supported them in their work. While 95% of the intervention group mentioned they received support from MPMS and 85% from EWRs, while only 51% & 43% from comparison group mentioned support from any NGO & EWR respectively. Participants report engagement of MPMS Staff in various support activities, particularly in organizing community rallies, connecting with community and SHG women, and negotiating with families for participation in panchayat affairs and trainings. Top two support areas mentioned by respondents in intervention area from EWRs were – 'They motivated me to attend Panchayat meetings and raised issues of women and girls' and 'They motivated me to attend Mahila Sabha and raised issues of women and girls.



The frequency of meetings with EWRs, young women & adolescent girls and health service providers is higher in intervention areas. 60% WC members from the intervention group and 10% from comparison group meet the EWRs at least once a quarter. While 62% WC members from the intervention group and 12% from comparison group have joint meetings with the HSPs at least once a quarter.

| Meetings with EWRs             | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>182</b>   | <b>105</b>    | <b>55</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>127</b> | <b>70</b>   |
| More often than once a quarter | 13.7%        | 3.8%          | 34.5%     | 2.9%      | 4.7%       | 4.3%        |
| Once a quarter                 | 45.6%        | 6.7%          | 52.7%     | 14.3%     | 42.5%      | 2.9%        |
| Less often                     | 25.8%        | 31.4%         | 12.7%     | 51.4%     | 31.5%      | 21.4%       |
| Don't know/Can't say           | 14.8%        | 58.1%         | 0.0%      | 31.4%     | 21.3%      | 71.4%       |
| Joint Interface Meetings       |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>182</b>   | <b>105</b>    | <b>55</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>127</b> | <b>70</b>   |
| More often than once a quarter | 16.5%        | 2.9%          | 32.7%     | 2.9%      | 9.4%       | 2.9%        |
| Once a quarter                 | 45.6%        | 9.5%          | 54.5%     | 17.1%     | 41.7%      | 5.7%        |
| Less often                     | 25.3%        | 31.4%         | 12.7%     | 42.9%     | 30.7%      | 25.7%       |
| Don't know/Can't say           | 12.6%        | 56.2%         | 0.0%      | 37.1%     | 18.1%      | 65.7%       |

Table 10: Frequency of interface meetings

Issues related to women rights and demands from the Health system are discussed more in intervention areas during joint interface meetings between EWRs, Young Girls Collectives, Women Collectives, Healthcare workers and school students (girls).

|  | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|--|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>182</b>   | <b>105</b>    | <b>55</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>127</b> | <b>70</b>   |
| Early marriage   | 46.2%        | 24.8%         | 32.7%     | 2.9%      | 52.0%      | 35.7%       |
| Lack of access to health-related services              | 45.1%        | 36.2%         | 38.2%     | 25.7%     | 48.0%      | 41.4%       |
| Lack of access to Education                            | 45.1%        | 34.3%         | 52.7%     | 25.7%     | 41.7%      | 38.6%       |
| Lack of Safety   | 39.6%        | 25.7%         | 54.5%     | 37.1%     | 33.1%      | 20.0%       |
| Low awareness about Menstrual Hygiene                  | 37.4%        | 28.6%         | 41.8%     | 28.6%     | 35.4%      | 28.6%       |
| Lack of access to information related to SRHR          | 33.0%        | 13.3%         | 27.3%     | 5.7%      | 35.4%      | 17.1%       |
| Lack of access to sanitary napkins/ menstrual products | 22.0%        | 30.5%         | 34.5%     | 34.3%     | 16.5%      | 28.6%       |
| Anemia & Malnutrition                                  | 21.4%        | 24.8%         | 10.9%     | 8.6%      | 26.0%      | 32.9%       |
| Restricted Mobility                                    | 13.7%        | 6.7%          | 3.6%      | 0.0%      | 18.1%      | 10.0%       |

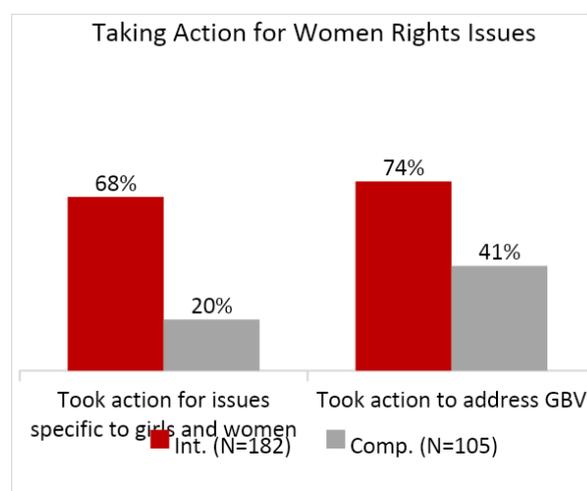
Table 11: Issues discussed

#### 4. Addressing Women Rights issues:

The intervention groups in both UP and Bihar exhibit high awareness and a better understanding of gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence compared to the comparison groups. Almost all the respondents in intervention area in both the states had heard of the terms GBD & GBV but only 86%-87% in comparison areas. Almost all the respondents in intervention areas said that they learnt about the concepts of Feminist Leader, GBD, GBV from trainings conducted by MPMS. In comparison area, most of them learnt about these concepts from 'Mass Media – Television/ Radio/ Newspaper/ Magazines etc', 'Through Panchayat member' and/or 'Social Media - YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram etc'.

The intervention groups (74%) in both UP (86%) and Bihar (69%) demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility in addressing gender-based discrimination and violence against women than comparison group (42%).

Women collectives in intervention areas (68%-Int.; 20%-Comp.) are more active in addressing issues specific to girls and women, with 71% in Uttar Pradesh and 67% in Bihar taking action. Similarly, WCs from intervention areas are more active in addressing gender-based violence (74%-Int.; 41%-Comp.), with 86% in Uttar Pradesh and 69% in Bihar taking action. The top four actions taken by them in intervention areas are – 'Meet officials at block & district level collectively to demand for women & girls rights, VAW etc (65%)', 'Supporting women and girls to receive benefits from government schemes (61%)', 'Organized a rally to sensitize the community on women & girls rights, VAW etc (58%)' and 'Participate in Protests to demand for women & girls rights, VAW etc (56%)'.



These key findings underscore the enhanced engagement and effectiveness of women collectives in intervention areas, especially through regular and structured meetings with community members, EWRs, and health workers, leading to better advocacy and community health outcomes. It highlights the significant impact of intervention programs on the empowerment and active engagement of women collectives in various socio-economic and advocacy activities compared to their counterparts in non-intervention areas.

## 5. KEY FINDINGS FROM YOUNG WOMEN & ADOLESCENT GIRLS SEGMENT

### 1. Basic Profile and Background

Close to 90% of the respondents across the two arms were less than 20 years of age. Thus, a large majority of respondents were unmarried, with 96.6% in intervention areas and 95.2% in comparison areas. The majority of respondents from this segment in both UP and Bihar follow Hinduism, with 93.2% in intervention areas and 95.2% in comparison areas. A significant portion of respondents belong to Other Backward Classes (OBC), accounting for 56.8% in intervention areas and 45.2% in comparison areas. Scheduled Castes (SC) make up 40.9% in intervention areas and 39.4% in comparison areas.

|                       | Overall Int. | Overall Comp. | UP Int.   | UP Comp.  | Bihar Int. | Bihar Comp. |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>176</b>   | <b>104</b>    | <b>52</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>124</b> | <b>71</b>   |
| <b>Religion</b>       |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| Hindu                 | 93.2%        | 95.2%         | 92.3%     | 100.0%    | 93.5%      | 93.0%       |
| Islam                 | 6.8%         | 4.8%          | 7.7%      | 0.0%      | 6.5%       | 7.0%        |
| <b>Caste Category</b> |              |               |           |           |            |             |
| Scheduled Caste       | 40.9%        | 39.4%         | 46.2%     | 54.5%     | 38.7%      | 32.4%       |
| Scheduled Tribe       | 1.1%         | 4.8%          | 0.0%      | 3.0%      | 1.6%       | 5.6%        |
| General               | 1.1%         | 7.7%          | 0.0%      | 21.2%     | 1.6%       | 1.4%        |
| Other Backward Class  | 56.8%        | 45.2%         | 53.8%     | 21.2%     | 58.1%      | 56.3%       |
| Don't know/ can't say | 0.0%         | 2.9%          | 0.0%      | 0.0%      | 0.0%       | 4.2%        |

Table 12: Religion and Caste Category

In UP, 39% of respondents in intervention areas have studied up to Higher Secondary, while 36% in comparison areas have only studied up to Secondary school. In Bihar, 44% in both intervention and comparison areas have studied up to Higher Secondary.

In UP, 83% of respondents in intervention areas have a bank account in their name compared to 64% in comparison areas. In Bihar, the figures are 96% in intervention areas and 90% in comparison areas. 22.7% of respondents in intervention areas are engaged in some kind of paid work compared to 12.5% in comparison areas. Among those engaged in paid work, common occupations include private service, agricultural labor, and skilled labor/artisan.

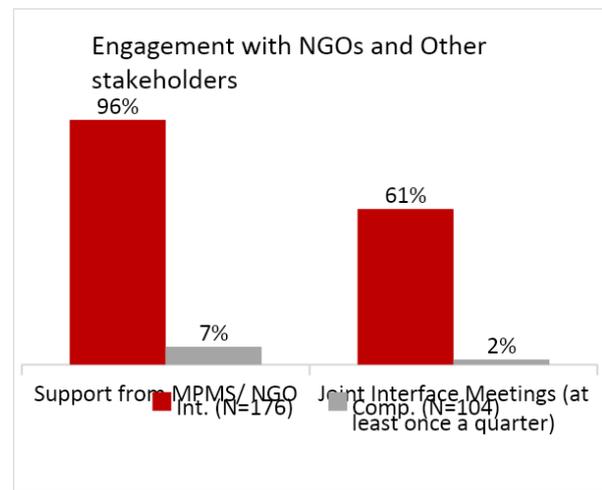
### 2. Support and Capacity Building:

All respondents from intervention areas knew about the MPMS program, with 100% awareness in both UP and Bihar. 93.8% of respondents in intervention areas received complete support from family members to join the Young Women Collectives (YWC). All respondents in UP and 84% in Bihar attended training or orientation sessions through the MPMS program. Mainly four reasons were mentioned by 20 respondents in Bihar intervention area for not receiving any training / not attending capacity building sessions – 'I was unaware', 'I was not called for the training', 'I had other priorities at that time' and 'I was not allowed to attend by my family members'. The respondents who attended the training/sessions/meetings under MPMS were asked how many sessions they had attended till date. In UP, more than ½ of the respondents said that they attended meetings regularly. In Bihar, 39% said that they attended the meetings regularly.

Key learnings from the training sessions include women's health, gender norms, schemes related to women's development, and recognizing and addressing violence against women.

### 3. Participation and Engagement:

- Respondents were asked how MPMS Staff/ NGOs supported them in raising women and girls rights issues. Respondents were asked how CMs/ MPMS Staff/ NGOs supported them in raising women and girls rights issues. 93% from comparison areas said they did not receive any support from any NGO while 96% from the intervention group received support from MPMS. The top five support areas mentioned were – ‘Support us in organizing rallies to sensitize the community on issues of women and girls’, ‘Regularly encourage us to participate in panchayat affairs’, ‘Negotiate with our family members so that they allow us to participate’, ‘Connect us with community women and SHG women’ and ‘Organize trainings for us’.



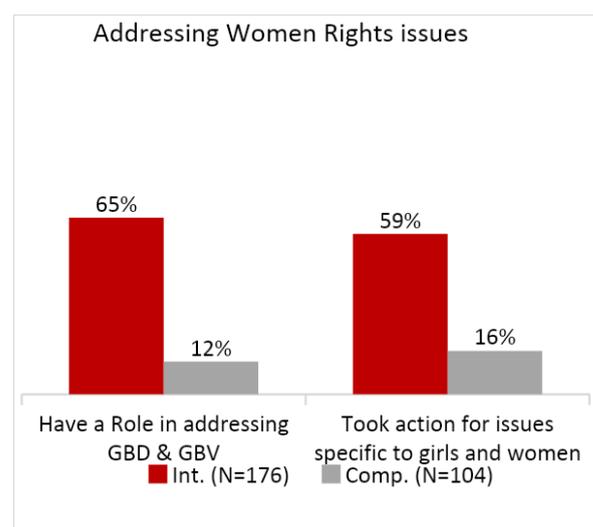
- Joint interface meetings between EWRs, young girls collectives, women collectives, healthcare workers, and school students occur at least once a quarter for 2% respondents in comparison areas and 61% in intervention group (90%- UP; 48%- Bihar). Key issues discussed in joint interface meetings include lack of access to health services, safety, household responsibilities, access to education, and early marriage.

### 4. Addressing Women Rights issues:

- Almost all respondents in intervention areas have heard of GBD & GBV, while in comparison areas the awareness was 83%. The understanding of GBD focused on issues such as less education for girls, early marriage, and discrimination in food, nutrition, and healthcare. Key understandings related to GBV include threats, humiliation, slapping, and controlling mobility.

- 83% of respondents in UP and 57% in Bihar from Intervention group (65%) and 11% from comparison group believe they have a role in addressing GBD and GBV, citing reasons such as ensuring equal rights and the importance of ending discrimination for village development.

- More than half of the respondents in intervention areas in UP (58%) and Bihar (59%) reported taking actions to benefit women and girls. While this proportion was only 16% in comparison areas. Common actions include meeting officials, participating in protests, organizing rallies, and supporting women and girls to receive benefits from government schemes.



## 6. EFFICACY OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Efforts to tackle women and community-related issues are underway. Initiatives are primarily focused on raising awareness and providing knowledge related to education, healthcare, domestic violence, and economic opportunities. There is a significant emphasis on educating adolescent girls about their rights and health issues. There is a strong emphasis on involving the community in addressing these issues, ensuring that solutions are sustainable and culturally appropriate. The efforts lead to increased awareness among girls about their health and rights, and thus leading to better health outcomes and empowerment.

The initiatives across different states and categories have made significant strides in addressing women and community-related issues. While there are challenges, the overall impact has been positive, with increased awareness and empowerment being the most notable outcomes.

For the 16-day campaign for inclusive feminism, 52% of EWRs in intervention areas acknowledged its awareness, with higher proportion in UP (79%) than Bihar (40%); 59% among WC & YWC respondents (84% - UP, 49%- Bihar).

The 16-day campaign was followed up by "Gender ka Bavandar" (largely meaning to create turmoil gender conversation) Podcast series for MPMS interventions. The awareness for the podcast series was 38% of EWRs (53% in UP and 31% in Bihar), 45% women collective members (55% - UP, 41%- Bihar) and 49% among YWC category respondents (62% - UP, 44%- Bihar).

The awareness In intervention areas, the highest awareness was about topics related to domestic violence and violence against women (85%), with UP showing the highest awareness (96%) compared to Bihar (77%). Topics like community perception, gender bias, and intersectionality were also significantly recognized in intervention areas. The overall reception of the campaign was positive, with 37% rating it as very good and 58% as good among EWRs

The campaign was found to be helpful in various aspects, particularly in gaining knowledge about different types of violence (78%) and increasing understanding of women's rights (73%). UP EWRs found the campaign more helpful in their work (72%) and in understanding violence prevention (80%) compared to Bihar (18% and 53%, respectively).

The campaigns across UP and Bihar focused on gender equality, domestic violence, and caste-based inequalities. Methods like rallies, street plays, visual aids, and interactive sessions in schools were utilized to spread awareness. The involvement of local stakeholders, including women, program staff, and community leaders, was crucial. The effectiveness of these campaigns was reflected in increased awareness and positive changes in societal attitudes, as mentioned by the respondents. Most participants were aware of the "Gender ka bavandar" podcast some did not have enough exposure.

*"As a part of 16 days campaign, Rallies, Dramas, Plays and Songs were organized here. Men and old men & women also participated; we can see lot of changes in our village. Earlier old ladies used to taunt us if we are going to attend meeting, but now they tell us to go and learn new information from the meeting and share it with them. They cooperate with us now. They have started to help us. - Women Collective members FGD Mahoba, UP"*

*"Earlier, we did not know about violence happening in our village against women, there used to be many child marriages. Ma'am said, and informed that child marriages and violence against women is not good, and we had gone to the village with Ma'am to spread awareness. Now, she said that in our village, there are very less child marriages happening and suppression and violence against women as reduced a lot. This has happened since our meetings have started in the village- Young Girls FGD Vaishali, Bihar."*

*"The girls of the panchayat had taken out a rally on cycles... Then the gender discrimination has been removed. And handicapped persons were also discussed... Woman should not tolerate violence." - HSP, Bihar*

Respondents' responses reflect a positive reception to the campaign, highlighting the perceived benefits and the valuable information provided. There is increased awareness and education among

the participants.

Respondents have mentioned and expressed gratitude for the information that they were previously unaware of, suggesting the campaign is successfully filling knowledge gaps. There are mentions of positive changes within communities, with participants noting improved practices and behaviors as a result of the campaign. Participants have highlighted the need for more frequent sessions, and the inclusion of more interactive elements. Participants faced challenges such as logistical issues, lack of resources, or difficulty in understanding certain materials.

There has been involvement of various stakeholders ranging from local authorities and community leaders to women and adolescent girls in the community. This diverse participation underscores the collaborative nature of the campaign. There was active participation in the 16-day campaign by many respondents. Some respondents mentioned occasional participation or lack of attendance at certain events. Respondents who actively participated described their specific roles and contributions, such as attending meetings, spreading awareness, and participating in rallies.

## 7. CAPACITY BUILDING OF IBTIDA NETWORK

The IBTIDA members play a crucial role in implementing CREA's program activities at the grassroots level, acting as catalysts for change in their communities. Their primary responsibility involves mobilizing women and adolescent girls, fostering leadership, and creating awareness on issues like Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and gender discrimination. They organize and lead various community initiatives, including workshops, rallies, street plays, and meetings, to educate and empower women. These members also provide counseling and support to victims of violence and discrimination, often coordinating with local authorities and stakeholders to address and resolve these issues. The dedication and resilience of the IBTIDA members, supported by CREA's training and guidance, have led to meaningful progress in empowering women and promoting gender equality in their regions.

### **IMPACT**

CREA's aims at making the Ibtida Members strong and capable so that they can take up the agency by themselves to run the activities of their own organizations independently. CREA not only gives them training regarding women related issues such as SRHR, GBD, and GBV but also helps them to understand administration and collaboration.

These capacity building trainings are not only related to MPMS but are applicable for every program, in order to empower the Ibtida Network to run smoothly without the intervention of CREA, decision making capability being one of the most important goal. Inclusion, Intersectionality is being worked upon currently since a large section of the society was believed to be redundant and was not even thought of. They are widows, transgender, physically and mentally challenged women and commercial sex workers.

- IBTIDA's advocacy platform is built around comprehensive training and awareness programs focusing on gender, sexuality, and rights. Members receive regular training on these topics, which they then disseminate within their communities.

Tara Singh from Samriddhi Rohtas shared, "I did not have as much awareness earlier which I learnt after attending the trainings," emphasizing how initial training on sexuality and gender-based violence significantly enhanced her understanding and enabled her to educate others.

Bindu Singh from Gramya Sansthan highlighted the extensive training workshops, often held in Delhi, focusing on gender issues, relationships, and system dynamics within networks. She mentioned, "Especially it was about forming the network of Ibtida. Like what are the ways of network and how network runs and what kind of things run within the network".

Sangeeta from Hamari Drishti emphasized the personal growth gained from training: "Before the training, I had a basic understanding, but the workshops deepened my knowledge and gave me the confidence to discuss these topics openly in my community"

Sangeeta from Hamari Drishti emphasized the personal growth gained from training: "Before the training, I had a basic understanding, but the workshops deepened my knowledge and gave me the confidence to discuss these topics openly in my community"

- IBTIDA's strategy involves building strong networks and collaborations among various organizations and stakeholders. This collective approach enhances their capacity to address issues more effectively and to provide mutual support.

Tara Singh spoke about the benefits of networking, "We had gone to the exposure visit at Jaipur. There is a very big organization which is 'Barefoot college organization' at Tilonia and it is working there very well".

Mamta Soni mentioned, "Our collaboration with local NGOs and women's groups has been crucial in expanding our reach and impact. Together, we are stronger".

- IBTIDA engages in both legal and social interventions to address cases of violence and discrimination. Members like Tara Singh and Bindu Singh have successfully intervened in numerous cases, providing support to victims and ensuring justice through counseling, legal action, and community mobilization.

Bindu Singh shared a case, "One boy clicked her photos and uploaded her photos along with him on Facebook in a wrong way. I called him at night only. I threatened him and told him to delete it immediately or he would go to jail". Tara Singh added, "We counseled him for 2-3 hours and then he got ready."

Rajni shared, "Our legal interventions have provided relief and justice too many women who otherwise would have suffered in silence. It's an essential part of our work"

- Educational programs and economic empowerment initiatives are crucial components of IBTIDA's strategy. By educating women and girls about their rights and providing them with skills and opportunities for economic independence, IBTIDA helps to break the cycle of dependency and vulnerability.

Tara Singh highlighted the impact, "Women here did not want to use mobile. But today they know little bit about mobile and they know how to type a message and send on WhatsApp and what to type and all".

Sangeeta added, "Our savings and cooperative banking initiatives have empowered many women financially. They now have the means to support themselves and their families independently".

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

IBTIDA members actively engage with their communities through workshops, rallies, and meetings. They conduct 16 days of activism campaigns against gender-based violence, engage in discussions about sexuality and reproductive health, and address issues like violence and discrimination directly with community members.

As an organization the fields were very limited previously, e.g. but inclusion and intersectionality has been very important for the network. The network is being led by CREA to ensure at this point of time that the Ibtida leaders know and learn the working of a Network. It involves, maintaining records, book-keeping & cash flow statements, distribution of rosters, organizing meetings and trainings at all levels, co-ordination and partnering for expertise between organizations, on-ground activation of big events and its logistics, which feminist issue to be raised within the network and its mode of presentation etc.

So everyone's key responsibility area is distributed by CREA as an outsider and they are trained to perform their respective duties independently. The target is to finally empower Ibtida as an independently performing network.

Bindu Singh remarked, "In our 16 days campaign which happens fortnightly against violence on women we have gone to the communities and to the stakeholders also with this issue".

Tara Singh noted the impact of these activities, saying, "We take out the rally and then we hold a meeting in a big hall which is in the police station. So that we should tell it legally that what kind of violence is happening and what should be done for it".

Swati Singh from Muheem in Varanasi added, "Our street plays and songs during rallies have been very effective in raising awareness and engaging the community, especially the youth".

## **DEVELOPING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP**

IBTIDA fosters feminist leadership by encouraging members to take on leadership roles within the network. Members like Bindu Singh and Tara Singh play pivotal roles in mobilizing resources, organizing events, and leading advocacy efforts.

Rajni from Sahiyogi in Patna elaborated, "Leadership in Ibtida means being proactive and taking initiatives. It's about connecting people and ensuring that the issues we face are addressed collectively"

Tara Singh also emphasized her involvement, stating, "Being a member of Ibtida member I participate in all the training. After training, I discuss with women and girls about gender and sexuality at the rural level"

Many incidents that happen inside the village are controversial or non-traditional but one cannot openly go out and tell them what is wrong or what is right. The strategy has to be one of self-assessment and introspection which opens up avenues for their own judgment. Also it opens up a box of diverse opinions and thoughts which leads to camaraderie and reverence for each other amongst the community women. So that is how the Ibtida Network works with CREA as its guide and consultant, understanding how to handle real life situations by themselves.

IBTIDA engages in both legal and social interventions to address cases of violence and discrimination. Members like Tara Singh and Bindu Singh have successfully intervened in numerous cases, providing

support to victims and ensuring justice through counseling, legal action, and community mobilization.

Bindu Singh shared a case, "One boy clicked her photos and uploaded her photos along with him on Facebook in a wrong way. I called him at night only. I threatened him and told him to delete it immediately or he would go to jail".

Tara Singh added, "We counseled him for 2-3 hours and then he got ready. We got them married with complete paperwork".

Rajni shared, "Our legal interventions have provided relief and justice to many women who otherwise would have suffered in silence. It's an essential part of our work".

Changes have taken place since the inception of the network. Most wards in the Panchayats have a minimum of one active leader from the community, be it the ward member, a woman collective member or a young adolescent girl who sees to it that meetings are attended and aids are arranged in advance. There is an awakening of identification of the fact that the norms were all not right and that inequality exists and that movement has taken up momentum.

### **CHALLENGES**

One of the primary challenges faced by IBTIDA is the lack of resources. Ibtida members during the IDI's emphasized the difficulties in securing funding for travel, organizing meetings, and other activities.

Tara Singh explained, "For going somewhere we need travel expenses and to publish something we need some resource. Then we need a place to make someone sit".

Bindu Singh added, "The biggest challenge is resources. Because to talk on any issue and to do anything for it we do need some resources which we don't have".

Mamta Soni from Diya Welfare pointed out, "The lack of infrastructure in rural areas is a significant barrier. We often have to conduct meetings in open spaces regardless of the weather conditions"

IBTIDA members often confront cultural and social barriers, such as patriarchal attitudes and resistance from community members. Tara Singh recounted how men initially resisted women's participation in meetings, perceiving discussions on sexuality and gender discrimination as inappropriate.

Tara Singh also shared, "When we discussed sexuality etc., they said that we are teaching them wrong things. So they used to stop them from attending the meeting".

Sangeeta from Hamari Drishti mentioned, "Breaking the cultural taboo around discussing sexuality openly is one of the toughest challenges we face. It requires continuous effort and engagement".

Engaging in activism can lead to fear of backlash from conservative elements within the community. Bindu Singh shared instances where members faced opposition when addressing sensitive issues like sexual harassment and violence. Swati Singh added, "There is always a fear of backlash, especially when addressing issues that challenge deep-rooted societal norms. We have to be cautious yet firm

in our approach". Ibtida Members say that Education is the only way to bring about change. So literacy centers are playing a great role in giving that initial taste of freedom and empowerment to make them value themselves.

## 8. COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Women leaders often rely on community support to navigate their roles effectively. The community's backing can empower them to take decisive actions and implement changes. Support systems mentioned include mentoring from senior leaders and collaboration with peers. Many women leaders face significant challenges, including societal norms and gender biases that undermine their authority and capabilities. They face struggles with gaining respect and recognition from male counterparts and community members. Structural barriers, such as lack of resources and institutional support, are also prevalent, making it difficult for women to perform their roles effectively. With the support from community and various stakeholders they have been able to make in impact.

Male PRI members and Health Service Provers also mentioned how they are working together with EWRs and Women Collectives to address women's rights and community related issues. Examples of how they stopped child marriages and domestic violence incidences with support of EWRs and women collectives were mentioned during discussions.

The findings highlights significant initiatives addressing women's and community-related issues but indicates a need for increased stakeholder involvement and respondent engagement to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. Continued efforts and addressing the highlighted challenges can lead to even more substantial improvements in the future.

Across both states, there is significant participation in interface meetings, with various categories of community members and women collective representatives playing active roles. Adolescent girls, elected women representatives, and other marginalized groups find a platform to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights. Members of Women Collectives discuss local grievances, facilitate community development projects, and ensure that the community's needs are conveyed to local governance.

Adolescent girls are actively participating in interface meetings, discussing issues pertinent to their age group and community. Their mothers also attend the meetings to encourage open discussions between mothers and daughters.

They participate actively in discussions, primarily

*"A minor girl was getting married. She was around 14-15 years of age. We came to know about it. We spread the information. Through 'Meri panchayat meri shakti team', everyone went there. People were made to understand over there. After a while, the wedding was averted. - Male PRI member, IDI, Muzaffarpur, Bihar."*

*Recently one girl wanted to study but guardian didn't allow her to study. Then we interfered and with help from MPMS and then we got her loan granted through Mukhya Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna. She got the loan and motivated her for further education and become self-dependent. - Male PRI member, IDI, Vaishali, Bihar."*

*"Like there are a lot of girls, who are not able to freely and openly share their thoughts with their mothers, when the interface meeting started, then now they share their views freely with their mothers.- Young Girls FGD Vaishali, Bihar."*

*"Issues such as harassment of girls through eve-teasing by boys, water supply related problems, electric pole repair issues are discussed in these interface meetings and these issues are then collectively raised at block level to demand for resolution- EWR FGD, Muzaffarpur, Bihar."*

*"When health workers informed us during meeting that all young girls should consume iron tablets and receive vaccinations regularly, we started following it up with ASHA. Earlier we were not aware. We also spread the awareness among all young girls in the community.- Young Girls FGD Mahoba, UP."*

focusing on issues relevant to their age group, such as health, hygiene, education, domestic violence, child marriage and safety. Open discussions with parents on gender discrimination at home, restrictions and their anxieties is encouraged. Some girls even discussed their restrictions on wearing western clothes like jeans and trousers.

Elected women representatives are significantly involved in local governance, often addressing and voicing issues on behalf of their communities. These issues are often discussed during interface meetings. Male members of Panchayati Raj institutions are also included in decision-making processes during the meetings.

Health service providers are central to the discussions in interface meetings, focusing on health-related issues and awareness programs. They provide critical information on health services, conduct awareness programs, and address health-related concerns of the community.

Often prominent figures within the community, including heads of villages and respected elders, who help mediate discussions are also included in these interface meetings and sometimes local government officials are present to provide updates on policies and programs, and to address specific administrative issues. Representatives from NGOs may attend some meetings to provide support, resources, and guidance on various community development initiatives.

*"I came to know from 'Meri panchayat meri shakti' collective that there was lack of availability of toilets in the village especially in the schools. I visited the block officer and presented this issue before them. Thereafter, I got this done from there. Their issues are being heard. If the organization, 'MPMS' were not in existence, their issues would not be heard much. For example, a girl was from Patri panchayat area was denied admission. The issue was raised by the MPMS collective, and a letter was issued by VDO for securing her admission. – Male PRI, Muzaffarpur, Bihar."*

The frequency of interface meetings is typically monthly but can vary based on the urgency of issues and the need for updates. Regular meetings ensure continuous engagement and effective governance, while ad-hoc meetings provide flexibility to address urgent matters promptly. The excerpts support these observations, highlighting the structured yet adaptable nature of these community gatherings. Regular meetings ensure that there is follow-up on previous issues and accountability for actions promised by community leaders.

The involvement of diverse groups, from adolescent girls, women collectives to health service providers, underscores the importance of these meetings in addressing community needs and fostering inclusive decision-making processes. This inclusive approach ensures that the meetings address a wide range of issues, reflecting the concerns and needs of the entire community. The participation of various stakeholders and elected representatives, underscores the importance of these meetings in fostering effective local governance and community development. Health service providers and other key stakeholders use these meetings to disseminate important information and raise awareness about critical issues. Interface meetings often lead to the resolution of specific community grievances and problems.

While the meetings are generally effective, there are some challenges that can be addressed to improve their effectiveness further. Sometimes, the concerns raised by women are not taken as seriously as those raised by male members, indicating a need for greater gender sensitivity. Ensuring consistent participation from all relevant stakeholders can be challenging but is crucial for the effectiveness of these meetings. While meetings provide a platform for discussion, ensuring that decisions are followed through and implemented can sometimes be an issue.

Interface meetings are indeed helpful and play a vital role in addressing community issues, fostering engagement, and facilitating local governance. The effectiveness of these meetings is evident from the resolution of specific issues, the dissemination of important information, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. However, addressing challenges such as gender dynamics, consistency in participation, and follow-up on actions can further enhance their effectiveness. The excerpts from

the data support these findings, showcasing the positive impact of these community gatherings.

## 9. CASE STORIES – HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPACT OF MPMS PROGRAM

### 1. Name : Sanju Devi (Elected Woman Representative)

District -Muzaffarpur – Block Marwan

Sanju Devi's journey to empower women began with her realization that to make a significant impact, she needed a powerful position. Her experiences taught her that real change requires a revolution. Her fight against patriarchy started when she decided to run for office. She even stood vigil at the polling booth ensure fair vote counting until the final results were announced.

Sanju's life took a pivotal turn when she connected with CREA's Meri Panchayat Meri Shakti Program as an EWR. . She attended training in Varanasi, where she learned about her rights as an Elected Representative and why it is important to become an actual power holder. This training boosted her confidence, empowering her to exercise her authority and resist being manipulated by other PRI members



to

She diligently oversees the implementation of approved schemes in the Gram Sabha, Aam Sabha, and Vishesh Sabha, ensuring that MNREGA cards are issued to deserving families. She ensures that no one is denied their minimum days of work.

Sanju Devi raised the issue of upgrading the local school, which only went up to Class 8, to an Intermediate level. Despite facing exclusion from important meetings, she persisted. She sought assistance from the Block District Officer and eventually presented her case to the District Magistrate (DM). It took a year of relentless efforts, multiple visits to the DM's office, and overcoming numerous obstacles, but she finally succeeded in getting the school upgraded, furnished, and equipped. This school has helped the girls from the community to access higher education without traveling much.

However, her struggles were far from over. On the day of the school's inauguration, she was not informed and found out through word of mouth. She rushed barefoot through hilly terrain to the school, only to find the Mukhiya's husband ready to cut the ribbon. Sanju courageously demanded her rightful place, stating, "Please vacate this seat as it rightfully belongs to me. I was the one who took all the pains to make this school a reality from scratch, and you cannot take away my right to inaugurate it." Supported by those present, she successfully inaugurated the school. Yet, her name does not appear on the foundation stone, a testament to the ongoing struggles she faces.

Standing proudly on the cemented road in front of the school, Sanju shares stories of her relentless journey. "The trainings at MPMS gives me the courage and motivation to continue to fight for my rights as an Elected Woman Representative," she says.

Sanju's efforts extend beyond education. She went door-to-door, convincing parents to allow their daughters to continue their education beyond Class 8. Initially resistant, the parents eventually enrolled their daughters in school.

She also took on a corrupt CDPO (Child Development Project Officer), who was accepting bribes to appoint a non-deserving candidate as Anganwadi Sevika. When reasoning failed, Sanju tore up the fraudulent candidate's file and reported the matter to the DM, ensuring the deserving candidate was appointed.

Sanju Devi has made significant contributions to her village, including building a water reservoir and creating drainage canals. Despite the lack of recognition from the powerful and patriarchal mindset of people of her community, she remains steadfast in her mission to improve her society. Her name

may not be carved on foundation stones, but her impact is undeniably profound.

## 2. Name: SONAM (Adolescent Girl Leader)

District Muzaffarpur, Block – Mushehri

Sonam is a dedicated History Honors student with a passion for uncovering the past and learning from historical experiences. One of her favorite topics is the discovery of India and its rich heritage in species and natural resources.



In 2019, Sonam joined MPMS. They first approached her parents, but her father was initially skeptical and interrogated Rekha, the community worker from CREA. Her father was particularly concerned about the idea of girls attending meetings. However, when he learned that Sonam would also receive athletic training as a football player, he began to see potential benefits. Despite this, her grandmother opposed the idea, fearing physical injury and societal repercussions regarding marriage and virginity.

After persistent efforts by CREA team and the unwavering support of her mother, Sonam's father finally agreed. Her father faced taunts from neighbors, who criticized him for giving his daughters too much freedom by educating them and not marrying them off. Despite societal pressure, Sonam and her siblings continued their education, with her father supporting them despite his work as a farmer.



Sonam's first trip to Delhi was marred by neighbors' insinuations that they were being taken for illicit activities. Overcoming such challenges, Sonam found that gender education opened new perspectives for her and many other girls. They realized that safety did not depend on traditional symbols like wearing the dupatta (long scarf generally used to cover the women's body and very south asian culture in dresses that women wear).

Sonam has now been a trainer at a literacy center supported by CREA in the community, teaching two groups of women who are often restricted from traveling far for education. She used to hold classes in a neighbor's verandah, sometimes visited by Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) curious about the activities. The literacy center, initiated by the program, also served mothers, although resources like notebooks were scarce. Despite challenges, including women's initial expectations for tangible gains and husbands' objections, Sonam perseveres. She sometimes incentivized attendance with biscuits and chocolates, while constantly reinforcing the value of knowledge.

At the Anganwadi Centre, she has arranged for women and girls to receive tetanus injections and IFA tablets. Balancing her responsibilities, Sonam attends college online and manages household duties, especially since her mother suffers from brain hemorrhage-related dysfunctions due to past abuse.

Sonam once confronted her abusive father, standing up for her mother and threatening him with retaliation if the violence continued. Though her father didn't speak to her for months, Sonam remained resolute.

Aspirations drive Sonam to become an inspector, aiming for independence and power. She believes the program should extend to men, educating them on gender discrimination and fostering equal partnerships for societal growth.

Sonam's story illustrates her struggles, victories, and the transformative impact of organizations like CREA and MPMS in empowering women and advocating for gender equality.



### 3. Name: Ruby & Damini (Young Adolescent Girls)

Vaishali, Block Bhagwanpur, Bihar

Damini, a fresh graduate, was running the Technical Literacy Program as a Technical Trainer supported by CREA. She and Ruby managed the literacy center together, having attended various trainings in Ranchi, Patna, Delhi, Lucknow, Banaras, and Bangalore provided by the MPMS program. Despite being from a Dalit community and facing strong societal opposition, they were chosen because they demonstrated the determination to break free from the oppressive norms imposed on them both as Dalits and as young women.

Their training focused on understanding their purpose and speaking up for their rights. In their community, girls were unaware of their entitlement to IFA tablets and tetanus injections provided by the government through the integrated child development system (ICDS), often being married off early and dropping out of school. Before the intervention of CREA, many didn't realize they had these rights. Damini and Ruby's efforts helped them and others recognize their worth and rights as women.

Throughout their lives, they faced severe caste-based discrimination. In school, teachers belittled their educational aspirations, and Dalit students were forced to wear uniforms and clean the school, unlike their general caste peers. Parents discouraged them from protesting, fearing expulsion. However, after receiving training on equality and gender discrimination, Damini and Ruby identified this behavior as a form of violence and raised the issue at an EWR interface meeting. This led to a meeting with school teachers and a significant change in attitudes.

One notable case involved a 15-year-old girl forced into marriage with a terminally ill man twice her age. After her husband's death and giving birth, she was introduced to CREA MPMS sessions by Ruby and Damini. These sessions helped her rebuild her life, and she now raises her child independently, works as a laborer, and regularly attends CREA meetings, becoming a confident woman.

Ruby and Damini also run the Girls Techno Centre in Garaul Chowk, Vaishali District, where they promote computer literacy. They went door-to-door to inform women about the center, facing resistance as many needed permission from their family members. Currently, 150 girls are registered, with 75 attending regularly. The center uses various activities to keep the women engaged and offers sessions on women's issues.

Damini mentioned- *"One aunty always kept talking about me, how I am a spoilt girl going on the wrong path and is trying to mislead other girls too. But I invited her for the Nukkad Natak during the 16 day Campaign. I didn't think she would come, but she did. And ever since she has been all praises for me. She liked the Natak and admitted that she was wrong in her opinion of me. She is now motivating me to run for Mukhiya elections, she is that impressed!"*

Despite many challenges, including societal taunts and dropouts, Ruby and Damini persist. They provide encouragement and counsel women to return to classes. One woman, initially critical of Damini, changed her opinion after attending a Nukkad Natak and now supports her aspirations to run for Mukhiya elections.

At the center, they taught Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, starting with basic applications like Notepad. Twice a month, they would conduct sessions on gender and sexuality in the young girls collective and during the interface meetings between young girls and members of women collective. Ruby and Damini aim to empower more women and girls, inspired by their mentors Nusrat and Reema. Their journey, marked by struggle and success, highlights the critical support received from organizations like CREA and other NGOs.

#### 4. Name : Bachchi Devi (Women Collective Leader)

District : Vaishali , Block : Bhagwanpur, Bihar

Bachchi Devi has been associated with CREA since 2019. As a young woman with four children, she faces significant personal and societal challenges. Her husband is a mechanic who repairs kitchen appliances and bicycles, announcing his services with a Bluetooth speaker. Together, they run a small shop, started with a loan from the Jeevika group, which they have largely repaid.

Bachchi's day starts with household chores until noon, followed by a short rest before she opens the shop at 3 PM, working until late evening. Her involvement with CREA and the MPMS program began when Reema , the MPMS community field worker, highlighted the knowledge and empowerment she would gain. Bachchi was particularly interested in learning how to raise her children well and understanding the logic behind societal norms. "We must not say yes to everything. We have to learn to judge the situation for ourselves and also say no if we feel it right. I learned that from CREA," she says.

Through meetings with Reema, Nusrat, Yasmin, and Rani, Bachchi discovered the importance of self-expression for rural women, which she believes is the first step toward broader change. She was unaware of the harms of early marriage, a realization that has been eye-opening for her. CREA MPMS has helped her find her voice, which she considers her real power.

One evening, while at their shop, Bachchi noticed a young girl standing dangerously in the middle of the road. She rushed to push her aside but realized the girl spoke a different language and had a tattoo with the name "Uma Devi." Despite onlookers making videos and urging her to leave the girl alone, Bachchi stood her ground, protecting the girl and refusing to remain anonymous to the police.

Bachchi's commitment extended to giving a formal statement to the police and offering further assistance if needed. She felt immense relief when the girl's Aadhar card was located, leading to her reunion with her family. "I have learned the way to be an empowered woman, and I will continue to help women in whatever ways I can."

Bachchi's bravery was recognized with an award in Patna, an experience she cherishes. She proudly continues her journey with CREA, striving to become a better human being and supporting other women in her village.

Many women in Bachchi's community are now fighting for their children's education and treating them equally. After joining MPMS meetings, these women have learned to help each other, such as taking each other to the hospital when men are indifferent. This growing environment of solidarity and mutual support is transforming their village.

#### 5. Name: Julie (Women Collective Leader)

District: Patna , Block Danapur

Julie joined CREA in 2022 and has attended around 24



"All the men were eager that should I leave the girl alone, I was scared that sexual violence would happen to the girl if I gave her up to the crowd or to the Mukhiya. And suddenly I remembered that Reema didi and Nusrat didi had given me a helpline number instructing us to help anyone in need. I called 112. In the meanwhile I fed her and she gulped her food and water hungrily. She was starved. She was trying to tell me with her actions someone had duped her into eloping and abandoned her. I did not care what the reason was, all I cared for was that she was a woman like me, and I needed to protect her by all means. It was then that I saw the real face of society who had gathered around.



meetings, including the 16 Day Campaign. Known for her sensibility and organization, she ensures information is disseminated and that participants attend events on time. Tragically, she lost her husband in a road accident in 2018. At that time, she was not working and relied on her mother-in-law, who supported the family by working as a domestic help.

During her CREA sessions, Julie learned about gender-based violence, discrimination, and the harms of early and forced marriages. Reflecting on her own child marriage, she now advocates for empowering girls before marriage and motherhood. Determined to become self-reliant, she sold her mangalsutra to start a small “sringar / make up shop” at home.

Julie has three children, with the older two attending government schools and the youngest at a private playschool. She also taught at CREA’s literacy center daily from 1:30 to 4:30 PM, helping women become literate so they can fill out forms, sign documents, and use smartphones. She has educated 15-20 women, many of whom can now take loans and read basic words.

Julie also intervenes in domestic issues, such as explaining to a suspicious husband that his wife's location-sharing and photo-taking are for important messages, not debauchery. Despite some men's objections to women attending meetings, Julie's mother-in-law has been supportive, never questioning her activities.

Julie entertains herself by creating content for her Instagram account. Her shop, stocked with the latest creams, lotions, bindis, bangles, and other accessories, is a go-to destination for women and children in the neighborhood, providing therapy and joy for Julie.

“I used to be total housewife never stepping out of the house. But now I have the courage to go to the city all by myself to buy my stock for the shop. Many people in the neighborhood started talking about me. That in spite of being widowed she dresses up nicely, wears suits and comes back late from the market. But if I have to buy stock from market it takes time. I have to complete it. If I want to wear nice clothes then I will wear them. I will not raise my daughter according to me, but I will allow her to study as much as she wants and follow her dreams.”

Multitasking has become a way of life for Julie. She is living life to the fullest while helping other women step out and create lives of their own, embodying resilience and empowerment through the support of CREA and MPMS.

**6. Name: Anshu Kumari (Adolescent Girls leader- Literacy Center)**

District: Patna, Block: Danapur

Anshu, a soft-spoken yet confident girl from Danapur, never perceived any discrimination within her loving family. At 19 years old and in her second year of a B.A. program, she felt she had a comfortable life and saw no need to join the MPMS program when Ushaji invited her. However, her perspective changed when she discovered that while she was attending a government school, her brother was enrolled in a private school.



Confronting her mother gently, Anshu questioned why there was a disparity. Her mother explained it was due to financial constraints, not discrimination. Anshu pointed out that this decision placed the burden of their financial scarcity on her because of her gender. She insisted that if private education wasn't affordable for both, then both should attend government school. Her mother, recognizing the bias, withdrew her brother from private school and enrolled him in the government school.

“The women who come to learn at literacy center are not too willing. They feel very shy to learn and say that we are old now and it is tough. They keep forgetting what they learn, but I tell them I can teach you again, please don't shy away from asking me. But many of them can, read by breaking up the alphabets. Some EWRs also come to learn. They are all dealing with so many issues at home, like husband's drinking problems, cooking and household chores, children's school issues, children ask for things like mobile...etc. But in spite of that they are learning.”

The MPMS trainings exposed Anshu to various forms of violence, including digital violence like trolling and stalking on social media, which can severely impact a girl's life. She realized the importance of recognizing and protecting oneself from these threats.

An incident involving a friend deepened her understanding. Her friend's parents disapproved of her boyfriend and were arranging her marriage to someone else. Anshu advised her to reason with her parents, suggesting they investigate the boyfriend's background instead of eloping, which could harm the trust of many parents in their daughters.

Anshu credits the MPMS program with helping her become articulate, confident, and able to reason effectively. She actively participates in community activities, going house to house to inform about Interface Meetings, arranging venues, and preparing discussion topics.

She has also learned to confront eve-teasers, urging her friends to stand up against such harassment. Anshu supports her education independently by tutoring children and worked at the CREA literacy center. Initially earning Rs.1500 per month at a coaching center, she now earns Rs.3000 and teaches classes 4 and 5 in her own community. MPMS has significantly empowered her, preparing her to face the world.

Despite these advancements, Anshu acknowledges that much work remains to reform society. Inter-caste marriages still face opposition, and different norms for girls and women persist. She aspires to communicate the triviality of these issues and promote a world of equality, which she believes would lead to true development.

## 7. Name: Afsana (Young Woman)

District – Mahoba District, Uttar Pradesh

Afsana, a 22-year-old pursuing her master's in economics from Mahoba district, is a passionate advocate for women's issues in her community. She has six older sisters and one younger brother. Her parents are daily wage earners, working as masons.

Afsana has been associated with CREA-MPMS for the past two years and with the organization for about 5-6 years. Her journey with CREA has taken her to Delhi for SELF training, leadership training in Bangalore, and meetings in Lucknow. These experiences, including her first flight to Bangalore, opened new worlds for her and allowed her to meet women from different states, enriching her perspective.

"I was so enlightened when I got my trainings at MPMS. I came to know of the day-to-day exploitation and the types of violence women are subjected to. We are ignorant of the types of violence. It keeps happening with us, but we have never identified it as violence. And the people who do it to us, also think it is normal to treat women the way they do," she explains.

Through CREA-MPMS, Afsana learned to identify gender-based violence and discrimination. She found her voice and began to appreciate her body, overcoming the shame instilled during her formative years.

She also learned that feminism is about inclusion, not just fighting for oneself but bringing together old and young, men and women, physically challenged individuals, and widows.

Afsana's first rebellion at home was a significant turning point. Witnessing her drunk father beat her mother nightly, she eventually picked up a tall stick and hit him until he fell unconscious. Despite her mixed feelings and subsequent remorse, this act stopped her father's abuse. "We have to raise our voice. We have to find a way to stand up against violence in our own way," she asserts.

In her village, Afsana confronted a situation where a mentally unstable woman was neglected and abused by her children. Despite initial resistance, Afsana, with support from Mamlesh, threatened to involve the police if the woman did not receive care and medical assistance. Their efforts succeeded, and the woman's mental health improved.

Afsana also runs a pad bank in her village, educating girls and women about female hygiene and reproductive health rights. With aspirations to pursue a Ph.D. in economics, she remains uncertain about her career path but is confident in her ability to lead and support oppressed women with the knowledge and empowerment she has gained through CREA and MPMS.



"There are many girls who were not allowed to step out of the house. I also used think it is better to be born as boy. And that there are good girls and bad girls, and we all have to prove that we are good girls. But now we know that we can go ahead with our choices and not be a bad girl in the eyes of the society. Now parents also come and watch us playing our roles in Nukkad Natak. They are also enjoying the change. They are allowing us to study."

## 8. Name: Preeti Kumari – (EWR)

District Mahoba

Preeti, known affectionately as "Pyari," began her journey toward empowerment and advocacy about 12 years ago. Coming from a village where women were confined to their homes, she initially had no knowledge of women's rights. During her pregnancy, she suffered immensely due to a lack of awareness and support, resulting in the tragic loss of her fetus. This pivotal moment ignited her determination to support women regarding sexual and reproductive rights, leading her to become an ASHA worker.



Five years ago, Mamlesh, a woman leader from CREA, recognized Preeti's potential and introduced her to CREA's initiatives. Through CREA and MPMS, Preeti received extensive training on family planning and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), enhancing her work as an ASHA. Although she ran for the position of Pradhan and did not win, she remains committed to her mission, earning the affection and respect of the women in her community.

When I registered my first FIR at the Mahila Paramarsh Kendra, I said this is my first step. Henceforth I will climb these steps upward only and not look back!

"I have learned not only about women's rights but about human rights as well from CREA. They have helped me grow as a human being," says Pyari. She emphasizes the importance of women reaching out for help and exercising their rights to medical assistance. With meticulous precision, she keeps records of patients' reports and documents, ensuring that no woman loses access to her medical history.

Despite her challenging personal life, including early marriage at 13 and years of financial, mental, and physical abuse, Preeti persevered. She worked as a laborer, both in her village and in Delhi, and eventually filed an FIR against her abusive husband. Her resilience and dedication to her community earned her the "Echo of Change" memento, celebrating her work with women and children on contraception, sexual health, and reproductive rights.

Preeti distributes pamphlets, condoms, and contraceptive pills, and facilitates copper-T implants. She actively supports young girls in opting out of forced marriages, advocating for mutual choice as the only valid reason for marriage. "There was a time when marriages were forced upon boys and girls because there was inter-dependency. Now I don't think anyone needs to think that way," she asserts.

Thanks to CREA, Preeti and other women have found their voices and are now vocal about their rights. She firmly believes that women no longer need to rely on men as crutches. "Woman always needed a crutch. That crutch was the man. Now she does not need the crutch anymore," she reiterates. Preeti, along with other young girls, now understands that knowledge is power and is committed to continuing her advocacy for women's rights.

## 9. Name: Renuka (Young Woman)

District: Bareilly; Block: Bhojipura

Renuka, a dynamic young leader and sportswoman, is currently in her final year of a GNM program. Her journey of empowerment and advocacy began about 12 years ago when she joined and later, through her association with CREA and MPMS, received extensive training and support.



Renuka has excelled in state football and volleyball, participated in cycle rallies, and represented her district in Delhi, overcoming significant societal and familial obstacles to pursue her passion.

Renuka found her grounding through CREA's SELF training. She faced immense resistance at home, where her parents and grandparents viewed sports as frivolous and unsuitable for girls, particularly after puberty. Convincing her family about the importance of sports, especially concerning the attire required, was a major hurdle. Undeterred, Renuka cycled 12 to 13 kilometers daily to the stadium, battling both familial restrictions and societal scrutiny.

"The first day my didis from CREA took me to the stadium, I felt awkward and scared about playing in short attire. But once I started, there was no looking back," Renuka recalls. Through persistent efforts, she gained her family's trust and eventually their support, demonstrating that girls pursuing sports or education are not letting down their families but rather enhancing their potential.

Renuka's advocacy extends beyond sports. She has raised her voice against domestic violence and patriarchy, even confronting her own relatives. After threatening legal action against her uncle for abusing her aunt, she successfully intervened, ensuring her aunt's safety and freedom. She also prevented her friend's early and forced marriage by involving the SDM (Sub Divisional Magistrate). With the support of Program staff, Renuka has convinced numerous parents to continue their daughters' education. She has successfully enrolled over 10 girls in her college, breaking the cycle of opposition and encouraging educational pursuits.



Renuka also runs a pad bank, an initiative she started after training. Her team of 25 girls provides affordable sanitary pads and teaches others to make their own, promoting menstrual hygiene and health awareness. One significant achievement was addressing the issue of street harassment in a locality plagued by intoxicated men. Renuka led a campaign, gathering signatures from 60-70 girls and 10 women, and submitted a letter to the authorities. This action prompted the Anti Romeo Squad to intervene, ensuring the safety of girls in the area.

## 10. Name: Dharmitra Devi (Woman Collective)

District: Bareilly; Block : Bhojipura , Panchayat : Karampur Choudhury, Uttar Pradesh

Dharmitra, a middle-aged woman, faced severe domestic restrictions and abuse before joining MPMS program . Her husband works at a welding shop, and she sought an escape from her violent home life. Despite resistance from her family and neighbors, who warned her husband that joining CREA would make her rebellious, Dharmitra was determined to break free from her confined role of cooking, cleaning, and serving an ungrateful husband.



Through CREA and MPMS, Dharmitra learned to identify domestic violence, gender discrimination, and the importance of education. Although she couldn't attend school herself, she committed to changing her community by encouraging girls to pursue education and not merely serve their families.

One of her notable achievements involves helping a young girl, "Seema," who was gang-raped by three boys from her village. The boys filmed the assault and circulated the video, causing Seema to withdraw into silence. Dharmitra gathered a group of women and went to the police station to file a report, despite the police initially refusing due to bribery from the boys' parents. With the support of the MPMS community workers / didis, they managed to get an FIR filed, and the boys were imprisoned. Dharmitra also ensured Seema received medical treatment and facilitated her re-admission to school with the help of her daughter, who is a teacher.

Dharmitra has also helped women reclaim their rightful properties. She supported a woman in regaining her share of ancestral land and helped another woman and her mother-in-law return to their household after being thrown out for giving birth to three daughters. Dharmitra and the Sanstha didis reasoned with the woman's husband, educating him about proper treatment of women, which led to a more peaceful living situation.

Dharmitra's daughter is a shining example for intergenerational feminist. She not only continues her studies but also supports her mother in helping women find their voices against domestic violence and discrimination. Dharmitra has encouraged many illiterate women to learn to read and write through literacy activities. She now runs a home tailoring shop and has been provided with buffaloes by the government for animal husbandry, making her financially independent.

Life has significantly improved for Dharmitra and her daughter. Together, they work towards re-admitting girls who had dropped out of school due to fear of molestation and social stigma, empowering their community and fostering a safer environment for women and girls.

## 10. MPMS PROGRAM EFFICACY FROM QUALITATIVE SEGMENT

- MPMS program activities/ meetings:** Meetings were a significant part of the MPMS program activities. Several respondents mentioned attending numerous meetings at different levels (state, district, and block). Trainings were another critical component, frequently mentioned alongside meetings. Challenges faced during trainings were also highlighted, indicating issues such as travel difficulties and scheduling conflicts. Campaigns and Public Events were mentioned as well when respondents spoke of the MPMS program. Information sharing was mentioned as a part of the activities, often related to the dissemination of training materials or meeting outcomes.
- MPMS Program and its activities:** Respondents from different regions shared varied experiences regarding the process of joining the MPMS program. Some encountered difficulties such as traveling long distances. The efficacy of the program was generally perceived positively. Many respondents mentioned that the program helped them gain valuable skills and knowledge. Some challenges were noted, such as logistical issues and delays in receiving materials. Common challenges included travel difficulties, lack of resources, and time constraints. Many respondents enjoyed practical sessions and interactive workshops. These activities were seen as directly beneficial and more engaging. Some felt the program was not as useful initially.
- Impact and outcomes:** Women leaders have successfully initiated and implemented community projects, leading to visible improvements in areas like education, healthcare, and sanitation. Their leadership has often resulted in increased participation of women in local governance and decision-making processes. There was mention of successful conflict resolution and community mobilization efforts led by women leaders. Despite their efforts, some women leaders struggle to achieve desired outcomes due to systemic issues and lack of sustained support. There are instances where their initiatives are overshadowed or dismissed by more powerful male leaders, limiting their impact.
- Community perception:** The community does acknowledge the unique contributions of women leaders, appreciating their empathy,

"We have a meeting every month. Sometimes we also have two meetings a month." – WC, UP

"I went to Lucknow for training. I learned about violence. If a woman gets into trouble somewhere, if she gets caught in a fight, what will she do? If a woman gets caught somewhere, she shouldn't lose hope. We need to take help from the government. Call 112." – WC, UP

"I had my studies, so I had to attend my college also, so I could not go much, but I got a lot to learn from there." – AG, Bihar

"She also told us many things, that way much awareness was spread amongst people in our village. She also emphasized on stopping child marriage, maintaining cleanliness amongst teen girls during menstruation for example, using sanitary napkins and talked about infant's growth." - HSP, UP

"The sisters who makes us understand about different subjects and topics and the girls who listens to us and sisters guides about the health tips or information like sharing details about pads etc." – WC, UP

"First time, I had to go to Lucknow, so Ma'am, Reema Ma'am and Nusrat Ma'am had gone to my home and they told my parents, so in the beginning they did not agree, but then I could not go to Lucknow." - AG Bihar

"It has been very beneficial and has brought about lot of changes. When Didi came, she asked me to join her in the organisation. Earlier I did not know anything. But now I have the courage " – WC, UP

"I got help from Mukhiya ji. We are very happy that we have got the help. We are running the school on time..." – EWR, Bihar

"We have spoken with sir. He said that nothing can be done right now. We can look into it after the elections." – EWR, Bihar

"Adolescent girls sometimes raise issues like condition of their school as there is no facility of toilet or facility of water or there is no facility of benches to sit ... We get it approved with the principal of the school because panchayat don't get enough fund for the schools" – PRI Male, Bihar

"Outcome is that a letter has come from there (DM) that work is being done on your case . In the coming time it (Anganwadi) will be opened." – EWR, Bihar

"I never got any support from home and when we moved out of house then people at home were saying you need not have to go out you should remain at home only but we are forcefully coming out of our houses" - WC, UP

"The head was very much upset with me sister it's like our village tap was broken and was not working properly so I had called to inform him and get it replaced so he is telling my son tell your mother to stop it as it belongs to your village so I said

communication skills, and dedication. Women leaders are often seen as more approachable and trustworthy, leading to stronger community bonds and cooperative efforts. Traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes persist, leading some community members to question the competence and legitimacy of women leaders. There is a tendency to undermine or overlook the achievements of women leaders, attributing successes to male colleagues or external factors.

- **Personal experiences:** Many women leaders shared personal stories of empowerment and growth, highlighting how leadership roles have helped them develop confidence and skills. These experiences often serve as inspiration for other women in the community, encouraging them to pursue leadership positions. Personal narratives reveal emotional and psychological challenges, including feelings of isolation, stress, and frustration due to constant scrutiny and opposition. Women leaders often balance multiple roles, managing household responsibilities alongside their leadership duties, leading to burnout and exhaustion.

*"Till last year, the ladies' washroom was locked. Only the boys' washroom was functional. When my own daughter went there to study, she used to face the difficulty. When she told me, I told her not to go to the school. Then I went there and met Sir. I told him that when the girls will have their periods and if the washroom is not open, then where would the girls keep their pads, where will they go. Will they go out? Why do you keep it locked? We keep it closed because the seat etc is not good. I told him to get it repaired. If the child does not come to school then you call the child's home that he/she has not come. But do you ever ask what is the problem with the child. So now there is a box kept. The girl will keep her pads in it. And that washroom has been made functional." – EWR, Bihar*

*"A minor girl was getting married. She was around 14-15 years of age. We came to know about it. We spread the information. We went there with them. Moreover, administration was also informed. Through 'meri panchayat meri shakti, everyone went there. People were made to understand over there. After a while, the wedding was averted." – PRI Male, Bihar*

*"We were facing lot of difficulties. Initially they would have said that here comes the rubbish stuff. She has come to give a headache." – HSP, Bihar*

*"I have got a self confidence in myself now and people who are living nearby have changed their mentality as well." – AG, Bihar*

*"Where I am going what I am doing and building or gaining self-confidence so all of this can be done" – AG, UP*

*"Members of panchayat says that there is no need for play ground for girls. Playground is necessary for boys, girls will have to do household work" – AG, UP*

*"Some of the mothers in law also put restrictions on them that if they would go out for 4 hours then household chores would get affected" – PRI Male, Bihar*

- **Suggestions to Improve the Program:** Suggestions included more localized training to reduce travel, improved scheduling, and better support materials. Respondents emphasized the need for more practical, hands-on training. Overall, the support received was appreciated, though some feel that senior people should also be involved in the program. A PRI member said that meeting information can be given in advance for better preparation. Respondents have mentioned that the program should continue to be truly beneficial.

## 11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the "Building Leadership of Women and Young Girls at Grassroots Level to Prevent Violence and Strengthen Rights of Women and Girls" project demonstrates significant progress and positive outcomes across various groups, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), Women Collectives (WCs), and young women in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar. Despite challenges such as societal norms, gender biases, logistical issues, and resource constraints, the intervention programs

have led to increased awareness, confidence, and active participation in local governance, addressing gender-based violence, and advocating for women's rights.

**Output 1:** Increased Knowledge, Capacity, and Skills of Women and Girls to Raise Issues in Their Communities/Public Forums Related to GBV, Early and Forced Marriage, Safety, etc.

1. Training and Awareness:

- 85% of EWRs in intervention areas received training, boosting their confidence to speak in public forums and recognize domestic violence.
- Awareness of gender-based discrimination and violence was 99% in intervention areas compared to 84% and 85% in comparison areas.
- Women collective members in intervention areas were more active in addressing gender-based violence (74% Int.; 41% Comp.) and taking action to benefit women and girls.

2. Active Participation:

- EWRs in intervention areas participated more actively in local governance, attending meetings regularly (42% Int.; 20% Comp.) and often unaccompanied (49% Int.; 23% Comp.).
- Interface meetings provided platforms for adolescent girls, elected women representatives, and marginalized women groups to voice their concerns.

3. Impact of Campaigns and Programs:

- The 16-day campaign and "Gender ka Bavandar" podcast series enhanced advocacy skills and mobilized women to take collective action on SRHR issues and violence against women.
- Awareness campaigns led to 57% awareness among EWRs and 59% among women and young women collective members, increasing participation in governance and community health initiatives.

**Output 2:** To build capacities of grassroots women-led organisations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and to strengthen networking between themselves. (Ibtida)

4. Training Workshop:

- CREA's comprehensive training on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and gender discrimination has empowered IBTIDA members to lead community initiatives such as workshops, rallies, and meetings.
- CREA has also focused on enhancing administrative skills, enabling IBTIDA members to manage records, bookkeeping, and organizational logistics independently. This has improved their decision-making capabilities and empowered them to operate their organizations without external intervention.

5. Gender and rights-based approach

- Furthermore, the program has made strides in promoting inclusion and intersectionality, incorporating marginalized groups such as widows, transgender individuals, physically and mentally challenged women, and commercial sex workers. This inclusive approach ensures a more holistic empowerment of the community.
- The program's advocacy platform, built on regular training on gender, sexuality, and rights, has enabled IBTIDA members to become effective community advocates. They engage in legal and social interventions to address violence and discrimination, providing essential

support to victims and ensuring justice through counseling, legal action, and community mobilization.

- Active community engagement by IBTIDA members, through campaigns and discussions on critical issues, has fostered a supportive environment for women's empowerment.

#### 6. Strengthening networking

- The program has also effectively built strong networks and collaborations among various organizations and stakeholders, enhancing their collective capacity to address issues more effectively and provide mutual support.

Resource constraints, such as difficulties in securing funding for travel and organizing meetings, have been highlighted by members.

Overall, the program has been effective in achieving its outcome of building the capacities of grassroots women-led organizations to incorporate gender and rights-based approaches in their work and strengthen networking between themselves. The positive impact on community engagement, leadership development, and advocacy efforts is evident, and addressing the highlighted challenges and implementing suggested improvements could further enhance its effectiveness.

### **Output 3: Strengthened Capacity to Advocate for Rights and Advance SRHR and Girls' Education**

#### 1. Capacity Building and Empowerment:

- Comprehensive training sessions empowered EWRs to confidently address SRHR issues and domestic violence. EWRs in intervention areas reported higher engagement in activities such as supervising anganwadi centers (31% Int.; 13% Comp.) and addressing cases of domestic violence and gender discrimination (33% Int.; 8% Comp.).
- Young Women Collectives (YWC) gained confidence and knowledge, with 58% of young women taking actions such as meeting officials and organizing rallies.

#### 2. Collaborative Actions and Stakeholder Engagement:

- Frequent interface meetings with stakeholders, including health service providers, led to collaborative actions to improve community health and gender rights. 60% of WC members from the intervention group met with EWRs at least once a quarter, compared to 10% from the comparison group.
- 62% of WC members from the intervention group had joint meetings with Health Service Providers (HSPs) at least once a quarter, compared to 12% from the comparison group.
- Interface meetings between EWRs, young women collectives, and healthcare workers discussed issues such as SRHR, safety, and education more frequently in intervention areas, improving understanding of SRHR access issues (40% in intervention areas vs. 22% in comparison areas) and health-related services (51% in intervention areas vs. 26% in comparison areas).

#### 3. Advocacy and Visibility:

- EWRs, WC, and YWC members actively engaged in protests, organized rallies, and supported women and girls in receiving benefits from government schemes.
- Collaboration with male PRI members and health service providers addressed women's rights and community issues, such as stopping child marriages and domestic violence.

The program has effectively increased the knowledge, capacity, and skills of women and girls, as well as strengthened their ability to advocate for their rights, address SRHR, and advance girls' education in their communities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue & strengthen the efforts found very effective and impactful:
  - To continue the training & capacity building efforts by expanding it to remote areas and localizing training sessions to reduce travel difficulties. Presence of government officials in training programs can enhance the support to EWRs and their participation.
  - Continue to encourage the involvement of diverse community stakeholders, including male PRI members, local authorities, health service providers, and non-governmental organizations, through more regular interface meetings and enhanced participation.
  - One of the important pillars of this phase was improved capacities of adolescent & young women through direct capacity building efforts. This needs to be strengthened ensuring sustainability.
2. Improving Reach:
  - Enhance the reach and impact of podcasts like "Gender ka Bavandar". The listening circles or some follow up plan with the community would help to outreach the program though the program was primarily designed for the audience who are active on social media and are not direct program participants.
  - Incorporate more interactive elements and practical sessions to increase engagement and understanding among participants.
3. Focusing on sustainability of the program:
  - The program has empowered and effectively built the capacities of the EWRs and the communities to participate in local governance actively and raise issues that impact women and girls rights. It is important now that these issues are taken up at meetings and the action plans are systematically in-built in the systems through the micro planning process at Gram Sabhas and other relevant platforms.
  - The program needs to work more closely with structures like block department, Health service providers and schools to take action & monitor the resolution of issues from Gender perspective structurally.
4. Scaling up of the program:
  - The rich experience of implementation of capacity building program with EWRs and the detailed manual developed by CREA can be integrated with the trainings conducted by Panchayati Raj training institutes like CTI and SIRD especially from the gender perspective.

1. Fact Sheets

- EWR
- WC Members category
- Young women category

2. Quantitative Tools:

- EWR
- WC Members category
- Young women category

3. Qualitative Tools