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EVALUATION REPORT



TRANSTEC
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

UDF-IND-07-177 - PRI Action for Community Development

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Background

The project ran from 1 October 2008 to 31 January 2011, with a total grant of USD 350,000 (out of which UNDEF retained USD 25,000 for monitoring and evaluation). The timeframe includes a four-month no-cost project extension to allow completion of planned and additional project activities in the State of Haryana. The project was designed by the NGO Humana People to People India (HPPI). It was implemented in partnership with three Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): Astha, Prayas, Creative Attempts in Rural Development (for the Training of Trainers component) and in cooperation with various government departments including District Rural Development Authorities (DRDA), Public Works Departments and Block Development Offices (for the micro-projects component).

The aim was to help elected members of 50 Gram Panchayats (village councils) in the Rewari District of Haryana State and of 50 in Nainital District of Uttarakhand State, especially women, to fulfill their constitutionally foreseen roles: planning and implementing village public works and their maintenance, local social and welfare activities, and contributing to community harmony and social justice.

As defined in the Project Document UDF-IND-07-177 in August 2008, the project objectives were to:

- make elected female Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- increase participation of women in decision-making processes and help them take a leading role in community development; and
- build capacity of all PRI members to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

(ii) Assessment of the project

Project design and objectives were **relevant**. Key data of the project holder's baseline survey provided evidence of the low levels of knowledge elected PRI members have about the regulatory and financial framework that governs their roles and responsibilities. Specific suggestions produced by the survey were considered for inclusion in the project plans of the respective target areas, to ensure that the reasons preventing female PRI members from properly executing their functions are addressed. The integration of both elected PRI members and Self-Help Group (SHG) members into a single target group enhanced the project's focus on social and developmental community issues of local relevance.

The project was **effective**, as it achieved its long-term objective to increase the participation of women in local decision-making processes. Discussions with a sample of elected female PRI members confirmed that they have understood their right and obligation to contribute to the improvement of local democracy. In addition, there are also first clear signs of empowerment as women proudly tell that they have started to intervene openly and more frequently during Panchayat meetings.

Comparing the project's inputs and outputs the project is considered **efficient**. Staff capacity

building expenses of as little as 4% of the project's total expenditure had positive effects, as former local project staff demonstrated the capacity to professionally handle issues of gender-related electoral participation and community development. However, accounting for one fifth of the budget's 25% salary cost component, expenditure for programme support and reporting by HPPI's New Delhi headquarter (HQ) was significant, given that evaluators were unable to trace evidence of related HQ efforts.

It appears that local staff was unfamiliar with baseline survey methodologies, since the analysis of collected baseline data failed to make a gender distinction despite the project's focus on elected female PRI members. A second survey to determine the project's outcome has not been carried out. Evaluators therefore determined **impact** on the basis of anecdotes, which relate to key issues identified in the baseline survey. The achievements presented in these anecdotes have shown that the involvement of women in Panchayat work had positive effects, both in intellectual and material terms.

Social issues are mainly addressed through women's federations, which were recently founded in both districts. Initially not planned as a project outcome, federations provide opportunity for women from several Panchayats to share and exchange ideas on how to solve pressing local issues related to e.g. domestic violence, health and education. Former project staff (on a voluntary basis) still plays an important role as facilitator and motivator in the federation process. For the sake of **sustainability**, the mobilisation of additional coordination and financing instruments is required, to secure and stabilise additional time and resources needed for continued capacity building for the federation members.

(iii) Conclusions

- Among the many signs of empowerment, evaluators most importantly have witnessed women who have become very articulate, convinced of their mission and clear about their development priorities. Aiming to provide responses to the societal and development needs of their local community, some have started to fulfill new roles as mentors and trend setters. The assessment of the project's impact though would have been more reliable had an end-of-project survey been implemented.

- The successful completion of micro-projects improving the quality of life of local communities has given PRI members the confidence to continue their efforts. The beginning of the operation of women's federations as a place for sharing knowledge and joint development/ application of solutions to common issues represents a good strategy to ensure sustainability. However, the fact that the grantee phased out its activity in one of the supported districts (Nainital) without a clear exit strategy has placed sustainability at risk.

(iv) Recommendations

- We recommend that the grantee conducts a second survey among a representative sample of elected PRI members. Covering achievements systematically and making a clear distinction between male and female beneficiaries will **improve the quantitative and qualitative assessment of impact** and of the needs that remain, which

may help to convince potential donors of the benefits an expansion of the original project could generate. To UNDEF we recommend ***to assign increasing importance to the integration of project monitoring mechanisms*** into project proposals.

- In order to ensure consolidated outputs and a ***more effective response to specific local needs***, we advise the grantee to implement future PRI support projects with a focus on one state only.

- We also suggest to HPPI to transfer the project's previous assets (equipment + documentation = institutional memory) to the project's beneficiaries (e.g. the federation's chairperson) to ***contribute towards sustainability***, should the grantee not restore its community development activity in Nainital district.

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

(i) The project and evaluation objectives

This report contains the evaluation of the project entitled “Panchayati Raj Institution [PRI] Action for Community Development”. The project ran from 1 October 2008 to 31 January 2011, with a total grant of USD 350,000 (out of which UNDEF retained USD 25,000 for monitoring and evaluation).

The project was designed by the NGO Humana People to People India (HPPI). It was implemented in partnership with three Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): Astha, Prayas, Creative Attempts in Rural Development (training of trainers or ToT component) and in cooperation with various government departments including District Rural Development Authorities (DRDA), Public Works Departments and Block Development Offices (micro-projects component). The aim was to help elected members of 50 Gram Panchayats (village councils) in the Rewari District of Haryana State and of 50 in Nainital District of Uttarakhand State, especially women, to fulfill their constitutionally foreseen roles: planning and implementing village public works and their maintenance, local social and welfare activities, and contributing to community harmony and social justice. As defined in the Project Document, the project objectives were to:

- make elected female PRI members aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- increase participation of women in decision-making processes and help them take a leading role in community development; and
- build capacity of all PRI members to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

UNDEF and Transtec have agreed on a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the manual, the objective of the evaluation is to “undertake in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved”¹.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an international expert, working with a national expert, under the terms of the framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec. In accordance with the agreed process, the evaluation aimed to answer questions across the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of *relevance*, *effectiveness*, *efficiency*, *impact*, and *sustainability*, as well as the additional criterion of *UNDEF value added* (see Annex I).

The evaluation took place from March 2012 – April 2012 with the field work conducted in Haryana and Uttarakhand States of India from 18 to 23 March 2012. The evaluators

¹ Operations Manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, p. 3.

² Due to the similarity of project environment and objectives, parts of this context section are identical with the evaluation report UDF-IND-08-253 of March 2012.

reviewed available project documentation and information on elected PRI members at Gram Panchayat level in India (Annex 2). Initial and final interviews were held with HPPI's Senior Partnership Advisor and HPPI's General Manager at their New Delhi Office. In addition, discussions with former local project leaders were held throughout the field visits. Interviews and group meetings were carried out in Panchayats throughout Rewari and Nainital districts. Field work focused on meetings and exchanges with elected PRI members, to confirm the project beneficiaries' experiences and to obtain updates of their most recent activities. Therefore this evaluation report frequently considers additional relevant information not captured by the project holder's previous reporting.

(iii) Development context²

The Indian constitution includes provisions for political, social and economic freedom. However, bodies ensuring local governance in rural areas were initially not included in India's constitution. Its article 40 then stated that the States of India shall take the necessary steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government. For Mahatma Gandhi the village represented the fundamental unit of India's governance structure: "Independence must begin at the bottom".

Prevailing conditions such as social inequality and discrimination against marginalized groups and women prevented effective realization and remained an area of concern for a long time, until 1992 when the parliament passed the 73rd constitutional amendment, establishing rural local self government in India, also known as 'Panchayati Raj Institution' (PRI). The amendment of the Indian constitution came into effect in 1993 and mandated the establishment of democratically elected Panchayats at village, district and intermediate levels throughout India, including provisions for (a) their regular elections, powers, resources; and (b) for the representation of the socially and politically marginalized sections of scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and women.

Despite the leading role female personalities (e.g. Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi) play at national level a constitutional guarantee was necessary to ensure minimum female representation at the local level. A reservation of one third of Panchayat seats ended the practice of nomination or co-option³ of women primarily originating from influential families belonging to the state- or national-level ruling political parties. The reservation refers to the overall number of seats as well as to the provisions made for SC/ST, thus ensuring seat reservation across castes and class. In addition, women can also present themselves as candidates for non-reserved seats.

In the State of Uttarakhand, which has a history of women's participation in social and political struggles⁴, successful campaigning by elected women representatives from thirteen districts, supported by a number of women's organizations, led in April 2008 to a bill increasing seat reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions to 50%.

2 Due to the similarity of project environment and objectives, parts of this context section are identical with the evaluation report UDF-IND-08-253 of March 2012.

3 In the 1960's and 1970's most state government considered the provision of co-option of two women (sharing one seat) as individual female candidates almost never succeeded in direct elections.

4 Source: Women's Empowerment at the Local Level - a study undertaken in the state of Uttarakhand (September 2008), Dr. Anita Dighe, Dehradun, p. 36 & 47.

The geographical distribution of reserved seats changes after each electoral cycle. In a village, in which a seat was reserved for SC, a reservation for women may apply during the next election. Or, in a village in which a reservation for women existed, no reservation at all may apply in the following election. This is to ensure that every weak section in every village gets a chance to participate in local decision making at some point within a given period. In villages with only one or two Panchayat seats the reservation must not forever exclude sections of the society from the decision-making process, for which no reservation exists.

India has endorsed a number of international conventions⁵ and policies as enabling measures to implement women's empowerment, such as the Mexico Plan of Action (1975), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). Most importantly, Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which India ratified in 1993, calls on the signatory states to undertake affirmative action strengthening the role of women in local democracy, in order to ensure their inclusion and equal access to decision making.

India's National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)⁶ aims to ensure the advancement and empowerment of women in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. The 11th Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012) takes this focus further, emphasizing the need for an "enabling political environment" and states that "women Panchayat members are empowered to take their own decisions" through "political-skill building of women members of Panchayats".

According to the results of a study carried out across India⁷, 85% of elected women representatives held a village council seat for the first time. The study also claimed that those who have obtained training on roles and responsibilities of PRI members and on rules and regulations of Panchayats performed significantly better. As supporting capacity building measures were unavailable to 43% country-wide, the study recommended regularly organising mandatory training for all elected representatives, "[...] covering multiple dimensions including rules and regulations, administrative issues, budgeting and finance and the implementation of development schemes".

However, training – if provided – often fails to address the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills. Training for elected PRI members needs to consider unequal gender power relations that are often reflected in behavior, attitudes and personal empowerment issues⁸.

5 More information about these can be found at http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=1725 and <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/confer/nfls/>

6 To follow up on progress made on international conventions : <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/INDIA-English.pdf>

7 Study on Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (April 2008), commissioned by the Government of India (Ministry of Panchayati Raj), to AC-Nielsen ORG-MARG, p. 157ff.

8 Source: Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership: Learnings, Handout 1, "Governance Where People Matter", PRIA, 2008-09, New Delhi.

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

(i) Project strategy and approach

Three key objectives constituted the strategic approach of the project as defined in the Project Document:

1. Raising awareness about rights and responsibilities of PRI members, through (1) an extensive programme addressing female PRI members, comprising workshops on female leadership skills, women's rights and of exposure/study visits as well as (2) informing the general public, comprising of street plays and a Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC).
2. Increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes and helping them to take a leading role in community development, by means of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) activities, a method through which information about community dynamics and needs is obtained, which can assist PRI members to plan and manage micro-development projects.
3. Building the capacity of all PRI members to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities, through workshops on Panchayati Raj and various development schemes, including follow-up workshops for the same trainees during the project's second year.

The above approach was based on HPPI's overall assessment of the role elected female PRI members actually play in self-governance, according to which local democratic processes are often held back by an entrenched patriarchal and feudal mind-set that insists that Panchayati Raj, and certainly women's leadership, will never work. To address this issue, HPPI suggested to engage in gender-specific capacity building activities to nurture the potential skills of female PRI members. The ultimate goal was the successful integration of women in the local development process, a situation in which female PRI members would be in a position to bring significant change to issues related to e.g. health, nutrition, children's welfare, family care and drinking water.

The project is embedded in HPPI's community development projects model, which aims to generate local cooperation among various types of community based groups, thus creating active involvement of people in issues that affect their lives. With its development projects HPPI intends to support the establishment of communities able to control and use their local assets to promote social change and help improve the quality of life, often in collaboration with public agencies.

The specific project idea was based on the grantee's past experience as a local implementing partner of the NGO The Hunger Project (THP), during three years (2005-2008) in the State of Rajasthan. HPPI concluded from its cooperation period with THP that the empowerment of female PRI members, as a concept supporting the improvement in particular of health, social welfare and local infrastructure, added an element of central importance to its community development model. This led the grantee to the decision to apply for UNDEF funding to implement the present project for the benefit of poor sections in Rewari and Nainital districts, where HPPI could rely on an existing network of local leaders and institutions from its previous community development support activities.

(ii) Logical framework

The Project Document translates HPPI's approach into a plan of project activities and intended outcomes, including the achievement of the project's three key objectives. The framework below aims to capture the project logic systematically, also attempting to eliminate confusion between activities, intended outputs, outcomes, and outcome indicators evaluators at times observed in the Project Document's result framework.

Project activities & Interventions	Intended outcomes	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objectives
Training of Trainers (ToT) and monthly capacity building courses for project staff	Staff members and volunteers have completed ToT and capacity building programme	Project team knowledge established on e.g. Right to Information Act, government schemes, social issues affecting women, government acts for women	Staff delivers workshops and follow-up workshops fully up to date on all aspects relevant to community development
Workshops & meetings on female leadership skills, women's' rights and exposure/study visits for female PRI members	Elected female PRI members are aware of their rights and responsibilities	The number of female PRI members actively executing tasks in the community in areas of special concern to women (e.g. health, nutrition, child welfare, drinking water) increased by 25%	Empowerment of female PRI members: Increased participation of women in decision-making processes
Street plays and a Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign for the general public			
Participatory Learning and Action activities (PLA)	Participatory problem mapping: projects are identified & plans made in 50% of the panchayats	Conflicts of interest managed competently and needs of the local population addressed effectively by female PRI members	Improvement of democratic processes in PRIs
Workshops on Panchayati Raj and various development schemes, including follow-up workshops	Micro projects are implemented		Capacity built: Women are taking a leading role in community development
Organization/facilitation of the implementation of local micro-projects			

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) Relevance

Baseline Situation

The aforementioned socio-cultural, economic and political issues and the fact that political skill-building is a priority in the 2007-2012 government plan confirm the relevance of the project's key objectives and intended activities. HPPI's baseline survey, which considered the responses of elected PRI members (435 in Rewari District and 458 in Nainital district respectively) from local areas targeted by the project, provides further evidence of the low levels of knowledge about the regulatory and financial framework in which they operate. Irregular attendance of Panchayat meetings was also confirmed.

Although the questionnaire template did establish the gender of each survey respondent, regrettably the survey's quantitative analysis in both target areas did not make a distinction between the responses obtained from male and female PRI members. The only gender-

Baseline Survey: Selected Findings in Rewari / Nainital Districts

Do you know...

✓ about fundamental rights	23% / 5%
✓ what local self-governance is	28% / 17%
✓ about the Panchayati Raj Act	15% / 5%
✓ where funds for development come from	33% / 22%
✓ what the income sources of a Gram Panchayat are	33% / 10%
✓ about any type of committee in your Panchayat	28% / 7%
✓ Did you attend the last meeting Panchayat	27% / 28%

specific assessment and suggestion that evaluators found in the survey analysis of the Rewari District (regarding the representation of female PRI members by their husbands or sons) appears to be based on the perception of project staff which assisted the completion of survey questionnaires. During their discussions with evaluators, project staff and beneficiaries reconfirmed a higher participation of male compared to female members in the Panchayat meetings: due to their agricultural, animal husbandry and household responsibilities, women's engagement in Panchayat

work depends on the support of the family. Therefore, female members of economically affluent families usually score better than others. Participation often is also subject to the availability of transportation.

The Project Response

In view of the survey results the grantee maintained the initial project plan. The survey outcome produced a number of specific suggestions that were included in the project plans of the respective target areas, in order to ensure impact of the project interventions and to overcome stereotypes, fixed mindsets and other reasons preventing female PRI members from properly executing their functions.

In addition, the grantee undertook the following efforts to ensure relevance of the project's interventions:

Survey Suggestions

- Increase participation of village inhabitants in Gram Sabha meetings, e.g. by using these to disseminate information about government schemes
- Clarify the block-level office's role to facilitate the provision of information to the block-level office about the type of community work for which funding support is needed
- Socially discourage male representation of female PRI members through intensified communication of their roles and responsibilities

During the first year of project implementation HPPI realised the Training of Trainers for its local staff and volunteers in Rewari and Nainital districts with the help of ASTHA, a reputable organisation with a long-standing track record of PRI work in the northern part of India. The project holder opted for ASTHA's training approach, because the NGO considers the relationship between elected PRI members and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as a vehicle for initiating structural change in development at Panchayat level, which ensured consistency with HPPI's approach. In the second year, HPPI's local staff autonomously selected resource persons/organisations, thus satisfying the project's additional/specific local needs.

The project's workshops on women's rights have targeted both elected PRI members and SHG members. While elected PRI members have the constitutionally assigned role to influence decisions of relevance to the development of the local community, SHGs mobilise engaged citizens in articulating social and developmental issues. Integrating both stakeholders, the workshops established convergence of views on social issues, such as gender discrimination, domestic violence, the problems arising from the dowry system and education for girls. SHGs are likely to progressively gain strength, as there are currently considerations at national and state levels to provide financial allocations to them. They are hence expected to become even more important partners of PRI members for future budgetary considerations in community development processes.



SHG Groups, the rural communities' social conscience

The application of the PLA enabled PRI members and other community stakeholders to gain a better understanding on how to build consensus, prioritize common needs and translate them into a development initiative. The approach, which also helped with the identification of project locations and resources, was crucial for the management and implementation of 65 micro project initiatives in both districts during the two-year project period.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project produced all of the outputs foreseen in the Project Document and in some cases these surpassed the initial plan. This was most importantly to the benefit of the project's end-beneficiaries, as the number of female elected PRI members reached by the project's activities exceeded the original plan.

Pre-election Support

During February 2010, the project engaged in additional activities prior to Panchayat elections in the State of Haryana. A Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) in Rewari District involved the organisation of street plays (songs, dramas) and the distribution of information, communication and education (IEC) material in 52 villages of 50 panchayats. The campaign increased the number of direct beneficiaries to 1,328 (planned: 1,200), of which 636 were women (planned: 400).

Street plays

Female spectators surveyed following various performances expressed their appreciation for the street plays, also referred to as "legal literacy street theatres". In particular, women claimed the street plays have helped them understand that casting their vote is a matter of their personal choice, which and should not become subject to pressure by/from their own family.

Post-election Support

During the first year, 14 three-day female leadership skill workshops reached out to 490 elected PRI members in both districts. Residential facilities were offered to trainees from remote areas in order to avoid time-consuming travel. The second year's 7 non-residential follow-up workshops, which lasted for two days, addressed the same trainees. In the case of Rewari District these also included the first-time participation of 235 newly elected members.

The grantee also expanded the project's target group by offering training to local SHG members in its 31 workshops on women's rights. Given their involvement in local community development, the project document envisaged linking SHG and PRI members, though without specifying the approach that was going to be taken for this purpose. The inclusion of SHGs in these workshops is considered advantageous by evaluators, as joint training contributed to increased awareness of social and development issues among elected PRI members, thus enhancing the project's effectiveness.



IEC material illustrations ensure illiterate recipients' access to key messages

Exposure visits were chosen by HPPI in order to provide 740 female PRI (195 from Rewari,

515 from Nainital) and SHG members (30 from Nainital) with an opportunity to personally witness the successful results of community development work achieved by elected women representatives in other rural areas, despite the usual difficulties they faced.

Street plays and awareness materials were designed in ways appropriate to enhance awareness among local community members of what to expect from their elected representatives. Signs and posters examined by evaluators in the Rewari District displayed crisp messages, which ultimately helped to increase the attendance of village inhabitants in Gram Sabha meetings.

Meetings organised in clusters of seven Panchayats, which were re-scheduled from monthly to quarterly frequency to better accommodate the schedules of both trainees and trainers, enabled PRI members to discuss, exchange and learn from each other at a regional scale about shared local issues. These meetings helped most elected representatives to establish development priorities and thus to better plan their work.

The above meetings also helped pave the way for the launch of women's federations. Each federation involves a number of Gram Panchayats and functions as a tool for cooperation among women to address and solve a specific issue or to jointly undertake advocacy. Initially not planned as a project outcome, the foundation of federations was seen by many trainees as a logical step: They had witnessed during the project's exposure visits that federations previously established in other areas effectively solved pressing local issues, such as a reduction of domestic violence through the closure of liquor shops and the improvement of health and education services. By the end of the project, one federation was established in each of the districts with the support of the grantee (Rewari: 260 members / Nainital: 750 members).

Sixty-five micro-projects were initiated through PLA, enabling elected Panchayat representatives to experience all steps from project identification to completion and helping them to simplify their interaction with the community in a climate usually opposed to the involvement of women. The micro-projects and the results presented to the evaluators were needs-based, useful (e.g. toilet facilities; drinking water supply installations including reservoirs, hand pumps and pipelines; solar street lights; pre-school and community hall repairs/construction) and clearly represented the outcome of consent established at the community level.

Workshops

According to Rashmi Gajrola, Sarpanch of the Kuwanrpur GP, the workshops provided her with the clarity about her rights and responsibilities she needed to fulfill her role. She also feels that the practical training on working with development funds has given her the ability to be creative and strategic at the same time. Now she has ways to deal with the local bureaucracy, which she says never wanted the elected representatives to know their rights.

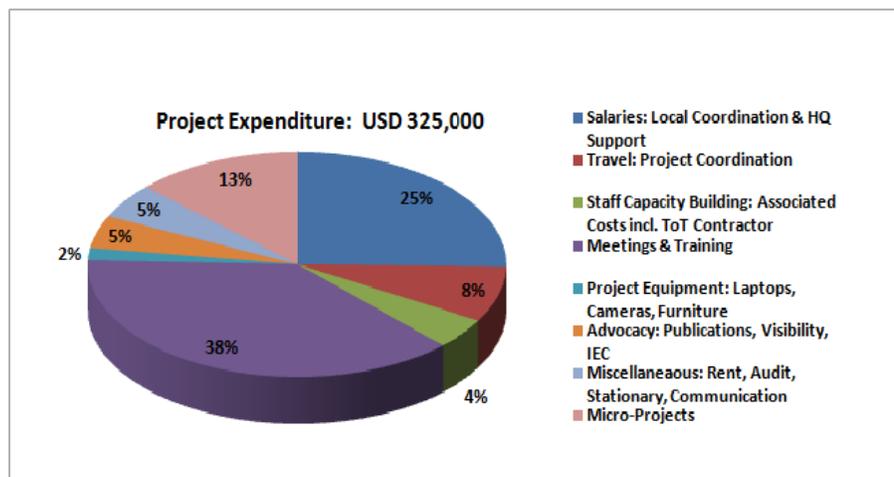
In 56 workshops, development schemes run by thirteen different government departments and other affiliated institutions were presented and the criteria for entitlement and ways to access them were discussed⁹. Notably, this has helped to obtain benefits for people living below the poverty line (BPL) and elderly persons.

Evaluators consider this statement all the more important, given that many states of India repeatedly have failed to effectively spend their rural development programme funding made available by the central government. The project, for example, used development scheme workshops to help trainees prepare applications for the financing of water tanks for storage by households under a government scheme for people BPL (trainees had picked up information about the funding opportunity from a newspaper article). All applications were approved.

Although in some cases the documented outputs exceeded the initial plan, we noted significantly different achievements at district level (e.g. number of exposure visits; number, total and co-funding value of micro-projects). These are most likely due to (a) multiple changes of the local project leader position in the Rewari project office and (b) the fact that the tenure of PRI members in each of the two states has followed a different timeline

(iii) Efficiency¹⁰

Capacity building measures for elected PRI/SHG members such as workshops, meetings and exposure visits were the project's principal activities. Amounting to 38% of the budget¹¹ they were also the project's main expenditure item, which represents an expense at levels equal to other UNDEF-funded projects of comparable nature. Advocacy expenses (including the pre-election campaign) and equipment expenses were modest.



Expenditure for programme support and reporting by HPPI's New Delhi headquarter (HQ) was significant, accounting for one fifth of the budget's total salary cost component (thus inflating salaries from 20% to 25%). Evaluators were unable to trace evidence of HQ programme support efforts justifying such important financial and human resource allocation. Project planning and implementation documentation, collections of press clippings, programme attendance sheets and posters found in the former Rewari district project office (Nainital has been closed) represented the previous effort of local staff, whose salary was

¹⁰ Quantitative assessments made in this section are based on the total amount of project expenditure, which excludes the budget amount reserved for evaluation by UNDEF.

¹¹ This excludes costs associated with staff capacity building and ToT (4%).

budgeted for separately.

Staff capacity building expenses (4%) had positive effects, as evaluators have met former local project staff who demonstrated the capacity to professionally handle issues of gender-related electoral participation and community development in the conservative settings of Nainital and Rewari districts. Costs associated with the implementation of beneficiary training and staff capacity building absorbed altogether 42% of the budget. Breaking the amount (USD 137,180) over the total number of trainees (1,328) provides an acceptable average cost of USD 103 per elected PRI/SHG member, as each of them benefitted from participation in multiple training sessions.

Given the above, the project was efficient. However, additional investment in local staff for capacity building and resource mobilization purposes, thus enabling HQ to delegate larger parts of its programme support and reporting functions, could have probably enhanced the project's efficiency.

The amount invested in micro-projects has been excluded from above considerations, given the relevance of the contribution to the development of participatory decision-making processes and noting that significant local co-funding was mobilized by the grantee.

(iv) Impact

Weaknesses in the grantee's approach to data collection limit the evaluators' analysis of impact to a review of anecdotes. Further to the previously noted absence of gender distinction in the project's baseline study (cf. section on relevance), HPPI also failed to undertake a second survey to determine the project's impact. According to the grantee, in the absence of a specific UNDEF requirement and in view of budget limitations, the option to hold an outcome survey was given no consideration. However, on the basis of the success stories gathered in the context of discussions with former project beneficiaries, evaluators have formed the view that the project had positive effects. The following examples¹² have been selected and grouped along some of the key issues identified in the baseline study to demonstrate impact on the performance of elected female PRI members:



“Safety Wall” micro-project, Rewari district, Dhani Sundroj village proudly presented by Chand Kaur Devi.

Many of the elected female PRI members the evaluators met were very articulate, convinced of their mission and clear about their developmental priorities. They identify and prepare projects for their constituencies, understanding budgetary provisions and the need to

¹² In relation to the success stories reported in the Final Narrative Report an effort was made to identify new anecdotes or to obtain updates on additional details of relevance to determine impact.

oversee these projects during their realisation. They travel to meet officials in order to verify the progress of their development projects' applications.

The majority of them are unwilling to affiliate themselves with a political party. Instead, they focus on providing responses to the development needs of their local community. This, and their commitment to working closely with SHGs within the federation, shows the consultation and constituency building skills they have started to apply.

Knowledge about the PRI Act and the potential of local self-governance

Kabool Devi, Sarpanch (chairperson) of the Hasaka Gram Panchayat (GP) and president of the Nari Chetna Federation, openly criticizes the state government for not informing elected members, and in particular women, about their rights and responsibilities. Being a graduate, she realizes the importance of education and training, which is why she always encouraged female elected PRI members to attend the training programmes of the project. During a project exposure visit to the Kuthal Panchayat of Mahendragarh District she witnessed the remarkable achievements of a female elected member of the Dalit community, who received a presidential award. Kabool aspires to obtain the same for her community development work.

Regular Panchayat meeting attendance

Chand Kaur Devi, former elected member of the Dhani Sundroj Gram Panchayat, despite her age of 75 years, is full of energy. According to her, the training made her realise the difference that her intervention as PRI member could make. She therefore urged fellow training participants not to miss the monthly Panchayat meetings and not to sign any Panchayat documents without understanding their content. Adhering to her principles, she prioritised the construction of a concrete road passing through the Dalit area of her village and convinced the villagers in the Gram Sabha meeting to build a protective wall around a pond, into which three children and several cattle have fallen before. She also highlights how useful it was for her to regularly organise meetings with elected women from neighbouring villages to coordinate her actions with them. Though not a PRI member anymore, she continues to actively participate in Gram Sabha meetings.

Understanding and intervening into Panchayat committee work

Sangita Badola, chairperson of the Lacchampur Gram Panchayat and president of the Sangini Federation believes that elected PRI members should remain focused on priorities linked to community building: "If you have a genuine agenda, you will find the majority supporting you", she says. A previous Sarpanch processed a government water storage project in such a way that he would have remained its prime beneficiary. Sangita objected to the manner in which the project was implemented and challenged it as a corrupt practice. A court penalized the former Sarpanch.

Access to development funds

Kamla Daramwal, elected PRI and SHG member of the Anandpur GP says she understood the opportunity the project offered when local HPPI staff interviewed her for the baseline survey. During the training she learned how to write her own proposals to initiate development works for her area. Nowadays she helps others to prepare project proposals. At a government seminar she recently surprised officials, male elected PRI members and a resource person with her knowledge about government schemes. A public toilet and a water tank were among her most important initiatives during the UNDEF-supported project period. Today her community work focuses on the improvement of the situation of single women, widows and persons involved in agricultural labour.

Fundamental rights

The development priorities of Garima Chand, chairperson of the Durgapalpur Parma GP and Treasurer of Haldwani's federation that comprises of elected women and SHG members, are focused on issues affecting children and women. As the Panchayat is close to an industrial area called Rudrapur, she is convinced that education in general and vocational training for girls in particular could increase their potential for job opportunities. At present she is not aligned with any political party, but she is willing to affiliate with a party that helps her achieving her long-term objective: the establishment of a high school for girls. She highly appreciates the tin shade cover an UNDEF-supported micro-project provided to the Junior Primary School and the Anganwadi (child care) Centre, emphasizing that the idea was generated in a federation meeting and that the Panchayat's decision to use the UNDEF grant for this elementary school was unanimous.

(v) Sustainability

The above experiences of a number of beneficiaries provide evidence that the project has contributed to the development of new and essential community assets, both in intellectual and material terms. The ongoing application of newly acquired skills and the benefit from micro-projects successfully completed by elected female PRI members continues to influence the daily life of the population in the villages covered by the project.

UNDEF support in particular helped the grantee to roll out the implementation of micro-projects from the early stages of project implementation. According to HPPI it was important to establish successful examples during the project's first year, thus enabling beneficiaries to rapidly familiarise themselves with a complete development process cycle. Beneficiaries were then able to move on to exploiting government funding during the project's second year and beyond.

The project holder's decision to expand the capacity building benefit to SHG members has linked them in a synergetic and lasting way with decision makers at Panchayat level, which carries the future potential to accelerate proper recognition and prioritisation of pressing local issues by elected female PRI members for the benefit of the local community.

In their discussions with evaluators SHG and elected female PRI members unanimously highlighted their vision of the federations as the place where they expect to share their knowledge and as the operational framework in which they want to continue to jointly develop and apply solutions to common issues to support the development of their local communities.

It is needless to say though, that sustainability will depend on the federations' members will to maintain mutual engagement, constructive internal debate about developmental priorities and the resilience to bring about democratic change vis-à-vis a social system and an administrative apparatus that still does not respect gender mainstreaming in a consistent manner.

Evaluators had the opportunity to witness a large meeting of SHG and elected female PRI

members in Haldwani (Nainital district), during which elected women demonstrated their commitment to the federation process, but the event also showed the important facilitator role that former project staff (on a voluntary basis) still plays. This is a clear sign that mobilization of additional coordination and financing instruments is required, to secure and stabilise additional time and resources needed for continued capacity building for the federation members.

Accordingly, HPPI has realised that the gains made by the project require further consolidation through continued work with federation members. As efforts to obtain new donor funding for an initiative specifically targeting the federations did not succeed to date, the grantee's local staff in Rewari district facilitates continued knowledge sharing for, and the provision of assistance to, federation members alongside the implementation of community development projects supported by other funds. Such type of support is, however, missed among federation members in Nainital district, where HPPI seems to have phased out its engagement in community development activity without a clear exit strategy.



Recent federation meeting, Nainital district

(vi) UNDEF Value Added

Project staff in most cases proudly made use of UNDEF's full organisational name to clarify the funding of project activities and materials. The UNDEF label was found extremely helpful for winning the cooperation of local administrative bodies and for gaining the attention of the local media. Newspapers were reportedly eager to bring the UN-funded project activities onto their pages, which established a competitive advantage for the grantee compared to other NGOs.

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. Based on our assessment of **relevance**, the grantee's approach to staff capacity building put in place a strong team with the capability to handle issues of gender-related electoral participation and community development in the complex societal contexts of Nainital and Rewari districts. For ToT purposes HPPI's local staff was able to select resource persons and organisations autonomously to best satisfy the project's specific local needs. The integration of both elected PRI and SHG members into a single target group established convergence of views at beneficiary level and enhanced the project's focus on social and developmental community issues of local relevance.

ii. In the absence of data documenting progress made in relation to the results of the baseline study, evaluators were presented with numerous testimonials of beneficiaries documenting the project's impact. Among the many signs of empowerment, we most importantly have witnessed women that have become very articulate, convinced of their mission and clear about their developmental priorities. This conclusion, and the comment on the fact that the assessment would have been more reliable had an end-of-project survey been implemented, is based on our findings related to **impact**.

iii. Based on our findings related to **effectiveness** and **impact**, the project has contributed to leadership development and increased participation of women in decision-making processes. In many cases this is particularly true for the project's gender perspective, since many female PRI members display increased intervention during Panchayat meetings, thus reducing the previous interference of male family members in their task. Having undergone a systematic training programme they immediately started to make practical use of newly acquired technical knowledge (identifying, formulating and obtaining approval of community development projects) in their respective constituencies, which further proves the successful achievement of the project's objectives.

iv. Comparing the project's inputs and outputs we conclude that the project was **efficient**. However, accounting for one fifth of the budget's total salary cost component, expenditure for programme support and reporting by HPPI's New Delhi HQ was significant. Despite this important resource allocation we were unfortunately not presented with much evidence of outputs related to HQ programme support and reporting efforts. It remains therefore unclear, why resources were insufficient to conduct an outcome survey.

v. Based on our assessment of impact and **sustainability**, elected female PRI members have become proactively involved in their Panchayats. In addition, the successful completion of micro-projects improving the quality of life in their local communities has given them the confidence to continue their efforts. The beginning of the operation of women's federations as a place for sharing knowledge and the joint

development and application of solutions to common issues represents a good strategy to ensure sustainability. In many cases federation activities have prompted women to lead by example, particularly when it comes to social issues (e.g. alcoholism and gender-related violence, education and family issues). However, there are clear signs that further guidance in the form of capacity building support is required to ensure that these federations will fulfill the expectations of their members. Moreover, the fact that HPPI phased out its activity in Nainital (without a clear exit strategy) has placed sustainability at risk in this district.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the outcome and similar projects in the future, evaluators recommend to UNDEF and project holders:

i. While the conclusions left no doubt about the project's effects, proper measuring of **impact** will be indispensable to identify remaining (and new) needs of the beneficiaries. Given the grantee's claim of scarce resources, a baseline study targeting a limited/representative sample of beneficiaries (e.g. pre-training interviews with 33% of the planned trainee population) could have solved the issue and would have freed the resources needed for a post-training survey. Continued relevant capacity building support for PRI members and/or women's federation members should be designed on the basis of accurate information about gender-specific and local needs. We therefore recommend to **HPPI to conduct a second survey among a representative sample of elected PRI members** to assess the project's outcome, applying its original baseline indicators. Covering achievements systematically and making a clear distinction between male and female responses will **improve HPPI's current assessment in quantitative and qualitative terms**. It may also help to overcome the grantee's difficulty in convincing potential donors of the benefits that could be generated by an expansion of the original project. In addition, we recommend to **UNDEF to assign increasing importance to the integration of project monitoring mechanisms** into project proposals to facilitate the capture of performance and impact.

ii. Concerning the conclusion derived from findings related to **effectiveness** we advise the grantee to **implement future PRI support projects with a focus on one state** only, in order to ensure consolidated outputs and a better response to specific needs. HPPI obliged its project teams to adhere to a single project plan while implementing the project in different local circumstances. For example, the scheduled elections which took place in the state of Haryana, were not addressed in the project plan. The effects of PEVAC, an additional activity which came in as an afterthought, could have been maximised if prepared in a more focused way at project application stage, i.e. involving coordination and joint actions with local stakeholders such as CSOs and the State Election Committee.

iii. The fact that the grantee has abandoned its presence in Nainital district shortly after the establishment of the federation, withdrawing leading key personnel and equipment, puts the **sustainability of one of the project's key achievements at risk**. As further guidance in the form of capacity building and material support is needed to strengthen the sustainability of this federation, we suggest the grantee either ensures the transfer of the project's previous assets (equipment + documentation = institutional memory) to the federation's chairperson or considers stepping up HPPI's efforts (as suggested above) to restore its community development activity in Nainital district.

IX. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value-added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

UNDEF

- Final Narrative Report, including Annexes
- Mid-Term/Annual Progress Report, including Annexes
- Project Document
- 2 Milestone Verification Reports

HPPI

- 2 Baseline survey reports (Rewari & Nainital districts)
- Baseline Survey Questionnaires
- Training of Trainers programme
- Photographs of project activities
- Print Media Coverage
- Selected pieces of project documentation

Other sources

- Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, Issue 3: May 2009: Rethinking The Rotation Term Of Reserved Seats For Women In Panchayati Raj, Nupur Tiwari
- Democratisation, Vol.8, No.3, Autumn 2001, pp.162: Increasing Participation in Democratic Institutions through Decentralization: Empowering Women and Scheduled Caste and Tribes through Panchayati Raj in Rural India, E. Bryld, Pub: Frank Cass
- National Institute of Advanced Studies-Gender Studies Unit (NIAS), Women's Voice, National Alliance of Women (NAWO) and Initiatives-Women in Development (IWID): Baseline Report Women and Political Participation in India
- Responses of the Member State India to the questionnaire on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)
- Study on Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions, April 2008, commissioned by the Government of India (Ministry of Panchayati Raj), to AC-Nielsen ORG-MARG
- Study on the Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution, Shashi Kaul and Shradha Sahni, Department of Community Resource Management and Extension, Government College for Women Parade, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir
- Women's Empowerment at the Local Level - a study undertaken in the state of Uttarakhand, September 2008, Dr. Anita Dighe, Dehradun
- Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership: Learnings, Handout 1, "Governance Where People Matter", PRIA, 2008-09, New Delhi

National legislative acts, policies

- National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)
- Right to Information Act (2005)
- 11th Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012)
- 73rd constitutional amendment (1992)

International conventions

- Beijing Platform for Action
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Mexico Plan of Action
- Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies

ANNEX 3: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

New Delhi (18th and 23rd March, 2012)

Ms Anne Marie Moeller, Senior Partnership Advisor, HPPI

Ms Karen Thorst, Grant Management and Promotion Team, HPPI

Rewari (19th and 20th March, 2012)

Ms Savita Yadav, former local project leader, District: Rewari

Mr Krishan Kumar, Teacher, Maliawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Ramrati, Panch, Maliawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Bharpai Devi, Former Panch, Pithrawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Krishna Devi, Former Panch, Pithrawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Manju Devi, Member, Self Help Group, Pithrawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Babita Devi, Member, Self Help Group, Pithrawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Chand Kaur Devi, Former Panch, DhaniSundroj Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Amita Devi, Sarpanch, Narayanpur Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Kiran Devi, Former Sarpanch, Narayanpur Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Sunita Devi, as Resource Person from DRDA, Rewari during the UNDEF project

Ms Lata Sikri, District Development Manager, NABARD, Rewari

Ms Kabool Devi, Sarpanch, Hasaka Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Bimla Devi, Former Panch, Jonawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Bhateri Devi, Former Panch, Jonawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Rajwati Devi, SHG Member, Rasgan Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Krishna Devi, SHG Member, Rasgan Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Jaswanti Devi, SHG Member, Rasgan Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Deepa, Former Panch, Rasgaon Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Ms Sunita Devi Panch, Rasgan Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari.

Mr Suman Kuman Yadav, Former Sarpanch, Jorawas Gram Panchayat, District: Rewari

Haldwani (21st and 22nd March, 2012)

Mr Santosh Yadav, former local project leader, District: Nainital

Mr Pushpendra Saini, former project staff, District: Nainital

Mr Vikash Rajput, former project staff, District: Nainital

Ms Geeta Mishra, former project staff, District: Nainital

Ms Garima Chand, Pradhan, Durgapalpur ParmaGram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Mr Pradeep Jaiswal, Teacher, Durgapalpur ParmaGram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Federation Members and Members of SHGs, Durgapalpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Kamla Daramwal, Ward Member, Anandpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Tulsi Bisht, Pradhan, Hathi Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Priyanka Goshwami, Ward Member, Hathi Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Federation members and Members of SHGs, Hathi Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Rashmi Gajrola, Pradhan, Kuwanrpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Janki Pokhriya, ward member, Lachampur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Members of SHGs, Lachampur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Sangita Badola, Pradhan, Lachampur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Leela Bargali, Pradhan, Jagatpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Anandi Karki, Panch, Jagatpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

Ms Hira Karki, Panch, Jagatpur Gram Panchayat, District: Nainital

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS

BPL	Below Poverty Line
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRDA	District Rural Development Authorities
GP	Gram Panchayat
HPPI	Humana People to People India
HQ	Headquarter
IEC	Information, education, communication
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PEVAC	Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaign
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
SHG	Self-Help Group
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
THP	The Hunger Project
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund