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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-IND-10-382 / Strengthening Grassroots Democracy in India
through Women and Participatory Media**

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All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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) Project Data

The *Strengthening Grassroots Democracy in India through Women and Participatory Media* project sought to empower marginalized rural women in the democratic processes by increasing their ability to create, shape and access information through continuing and expanding a local vernacular newspaper (Khabar Lahariya). Its intended outcomes were to: 1) increase capacity and participation of women in rural media in three districts in the Bundelkhand area of northern India; 2) increase access to news media in three districts in the Bundelkhand area of northern India; and, 3) strengthen linkages between mainstream and rural journalists and include the issues of rural marginalized communities in mainstream media.

This was a two-year USD 225,000 project (1 March 2012 - 31 May 2014 including 3-month no-cost extension). It was implemented by Nirantar Trust, an Indian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) based in New Delhi. It partnered with Point of View, another NGO based in Mumbai, for the information, communications technology (ICT) aspects of the project. Its main intended activities were to:

- Create a skilled pool of 30 rural women journalists through workshops on writing, editing, photography and ICT and by providing them with mentoring and field support;
- Create a bilingual (Hindi/English) website for all editions of Khabar Lahariya (KL);
- Undertake a needs assessment on the nature of rural media in the target area, and a survey on the state of women journalists in four Hindi speaking states;
- Establish a rural news bureau in Mahoba district and issue 72 KL weekly editions;
- Increase KL subscribers by 1,000 by training and establishing a rural marketing and distribution system for the Khabar Lahariya paper;
- Undertake an annual exposure visit of KL journalists to a state and introduce the KL experience to journalism colleges through visits and developing a learning module on grassroots media and women; and
- Hold a networking meeting of rural women journalists from across the Hindi speaking belt.

(ii) Evaluation Findings

The project objectives were directly **relevant** to the needs to strengthen the democratic participation of rural communities and women in the northern regions of India. Although India has a well-established democracy, the caste system and historical discrimination remain embedded. Women and marginalized groups continue to be isolated from mainstream democratic participation by their social status, geography, educational levels and language. In the project region, Hindi is used for official and academic purposes, but local languages, such as Bundeli, are used for communication. India has a vibrant and pluralistic press, but its independent press is constrained by a highly competitive media market dominated by conglomerates and partisan press. Market forces have a great say in newspaper policies and the news in urban- and male-centric. These outlets pay scant attention to the issues and needs of small towns and marginalized persons. In addition, journalism is predominately a male occupation. Bringing women into the profession helps broaden its perspective as well as its reach. At the same time, the KL subscription levels were extremely low within the districts, and some of the targeted reader groups expressed preference in evaluation interviews for different types of newspapers, seeing the KL more as a niche paper and a secondary source for news.

The project-funded training appeared to have been **effective** at empowering the participants. The women felt confident of being able to report on local stories and mainstream reporters in Mahoba felt the women showed an innate ability to identify news and report on it. The most favorite training among participants was the ICT training, with a good percentage of the women interviewed now using e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. The KL reporters appeared to have a cordial relationship with local officials and other male reporters, with local mainstream reporters sometimes following up on issues raised by the women. The networking activities anticipated in the project document with mainstream female reporters seemed limited to the one networking workshop held at the end of the project. The addition of the website helped increase KL's visibility and the profile of the issues covered. It also served as a useful marketing tool for the effort with donors and for crowd sourced fundraising. The grantee did change the strategy in the project document from expanding the KL effort to one additional district (Mahoba), and instead expanded it to three districts, Faizabad, Banaras and Mahoba. This resulted in more KL editions, but reduced the number of persons reached in Mahoba and the level of effort that would have otherwise gone into that district.

The project inputs were consistent with the delivery of the activities but not with the intended outcomes. That would have required much more intensive marketing and distribution efforts at the local levels and ensuring the follow up of important issues reported. This would have also required more investigatory journalism than the women appeared comfortable doing or would likely be expected given their social vulnerability. At the same time, the KL reporters did cover local governance problems and issues such as violence against women (VAW). The KL effort itself had been on-going for more than a decade before the UNDEF project and the grantee had incorporated the lessons learned into its efforts throughout this time. They have developed a relatively **efficient** operation of the paper, creating four pages in Delhi of national and international news that all editions use, and by having the four pages of local content sent to them by e-mail for the layout and editing to be completed in Delhi. Training and mentoring is also done by a core group of KL women trained from earlier efforts and by the core project group in Delhi. All KL participants receive a regular salary which ensures their continued participation and helps them to become independent. Nirantar Trust also used professional organizations for different aspects of the project, such as Point of View for the ICT as stated in the project document, and Innovation Alchemy, which it contracted to help develop a sustainability plan for the newspaper.

The creation of the KL newspaper has provided a tool that has gotten the participating women, especially the ones with lower levels of education, into the public domain, asking questions of men and government officials which would have otherwise been unthinkable. It gave a voice to the traditional minority, raising their issues at local levels through their reporters' questions and coverage, as well as nationally through the KL website and e-mail versions of the newspaper. Beyond the personal empowerment of the participating women however, the **impact** of this project is difficult to assess. A needs assessment was done at the start of the project but this was not repeated at the end. A mapping of the actual reach and use of the newspaper editions has also not been done which could also help provide user impact data. There were some anecdotes of improvements in service delivery made after KL reports, such as the government fixing a broken well and re-establishing the distribution of food where it had been stopped. The biggest impact is likely with the participating women themselves. The training and income provided by the project enabled some to finish their education, with a large percentage of the group interviewed in Mahoba district having master degrees. It also gave the participants a professional sense of identity and respect that most appear would not have had otherwise.

The KL model as outlined in the UNDEF project document is not **sustainable**. The demand by local residents to subscribe to the paper is extremely limited according to subscription

data and interviews. Its circulation and visibility are too low to attract significant advertising and, at the time of the project, Nirantar Trust was not seeking a business model as they worried that advertising would change the nature of the paper. They have since created a separate organization for the KL effort called the Women, Media and News (WoMeN) Trust. The board of this organization includes two of the original KL reporters as Trustees along with the Nirantar Trust persons. They engaged a professional consulting firm to look at the business aspects of the newspaper and how it can become self-sustaining. They have continued to publish the KL editions after the end of the project with the exception of the Banaras edition which was suspended.

There was **UNDEF-value added** to the KL effort. Newspapers in India are seen as political efforts, and as such are not eligible for bilateral funding. UN funding also gave prestige to the effort and endorsed the ideas of equality for women in the media profession and for the employment of marginalized women as reporters. The provision of a substantial two-year grant also gave the effort the financial security that enabled the grantee to adopt a more rapid expansion policy than they could have done otherwise.

(iii) Conclusions

- The ***project's intended outcomes are important and needed in the context*** and the ***KL model provides a proven mechanism for the empowerment of the participating women***. It demonstrates that with training and mentoring, marginalized women can play an important and professional role in their area.

- The ***women who work on the KL editions are to be commended*** as they work in extremely difficult environments and face physical, cultural and social constraints every day trying to cover their local stories and publish their newspaper.

- The ***focus of the effort among the different project objectives was not clear*** and whether it was intended to publish a newspaper that could then bring information to 'media dark' communities and generate democratic change and increased accountability, or if it was to use the newspaper as a tool to empower the participating women and provide them with continuing employment. This ***resulted in an activity driven project*** that lacked the links and systematic efforts needed to achieve higher level democratic development outcomes.

- The ***change of strategy*** to one of rapid expansion ***limited the results anticipated*** in the project document beyond the training of additional women and the publication of three more newspaper editions.

- The ***KL model developed under the UNDEF-project is not sustainable*** without continued donor funding.

- ***The development of the website had limited local impact but is useful to raise the visibility of the KL effort and its issues*** to national and international levels.

- The ***project might have had more significant results than were visible*** to the evaluation team, but ***it is not possible to know as results beyond outputs were not tracked***.

(iv) Recommendations

- For similar projects in the future, the evaluators recommend that the grantee ***identify a clear purpose for the KL efforts*** whether it be the empowerment of the rural women, production of a newspaper, serving as a watchdog for rural communities or strengthening democratic development.

- It should also ***undertake a user survey and mapping exercise*** for the print and electronic KL efforts to determine their reach and actual use. This can better inform the programmatic elements for future efforts as well as the business plans for the newspaper.

- The project should also ***strengthen links with development agencies/efforts and NGOs*** to ensure more systematic follow up of the issues identified in the newspaper as well as to push the development and democratic outcomes that news reporting and access to information can bring.

- It should also ***continue the national and international marketing*** efforts through the KL website, on-line edition and social media to generate the national and international level of support needed to subsidize the KL effort.

- Grantees should also ***incorporate outcome indicators and measurement tools in future project*** so the results of project activities can be captured as well as their outputs. This information not only helps track project performance but can help better target training initiatives, newspaper content and its marketing/distribution plans.

II. Introduction and development context

(i) **The project and evaluation objectives**

Strengthening Grassroots Democracy in India through Women and Participatory Media project (UDF-IND-10-382) was a two-year USD 225,000 project implemented by Nirantar Trust. USD 22,500 of this was retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation purposes. There was also co-funding of another USD 200,000 anticipated from the Sir Dorahji Tata Trust in Mumbai for the continued publication costs of the three pre-project editions of the Khabar Lahariya newspaper. The project ran from 1 March 2012 to 31 May 2014 including a three month no-cost time extension. Its main objective was to strengthen grassroots democracy in rural India by increasing the participation of rural women in the collection and reporting of local news and issues. This in turn would increase the rural communities' access to information, and strengthen the accountability of government officials to their rural constituents.

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of the Rounds 2, 3 and 4 UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to “contribute towards a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to 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 took place in December 2014 with field work done in India from 8 to 12 December. The evaluation was conducted by Sue Nelson and Mohanlal Panda, experts in civic participation and democratic governance. The UNDEF evaluations are more qualitative in nature and follow a standard set of evaluation questions that focus on the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and any value added from UNDEF-funding (Annex 1). This report follows that structure. The evaluators reviewed available documentation on the project, on the role of the media in rural India and access to information for marginalized and rural women in India (Annex 2). The team also reviewed the Khabar Lahariya (KL) newspapers and did a content analysis of a sample of the newspapers.

In India, the team met with Nirantar Trust, project participants, mainstream journalists, local officials, journalist professionals, the European Union and UN Women. This work was done in New Delhi where the grantee was located, and in the Bundelkhand region of Northern India where the project was primarily implemented. In addition, the team contacted Point of View, the implementing partner for the information, communications technology (ICT) components based in Mumbai by phone as well as additional Khabar Lahariya journalists and subscribers from other areas of Bundelkhand to ensure a good sample of participants and readers was reached. The list of persons interviewed is provided in Annex 3.

During the preparatory work, the evaluators identified several issues which they followed up during their interviews. These included:

- **Effectiveness of the strategy** of training rural women as journalists and its impact on the media sector, on the lives of the participants, and on the accountability aspects of local governance;

¹ Operational Manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, p. 6.

- **Extent of results beyond outputs** as project reporting was primarily done on output indicators; and,
- **Use of the KL website** which was created under the project.

In addition, the team assessed the issues raised by UNDEF:

- **Recruitment of journalists** and if the selection process for women journalists was carried out as planned;
- **Effectiveness and extent of bilingual media outputs** (Hindi/English) posted on the KL website;
- **Sustainability issues** and the current status of the newspaper; and,
- **Rationale for changes to milestone events**, some of which were exchanged for others and/or postponed.

(iii) Development context

With 1.3 billion people, India is the world's largest democracy. It is a diverse nation with many languages, cultures and religions. It has a growing urban middle class and has made great progress in its economic development. This has been hampered by economic disparities and corruption, with India coming in at 94th out of 177 countries and territories according to Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perception Index. Much of the prosperity has yet to reach rural India where 60 percent of the population lives on Rs 35 (USD 0.55) a day with the poorest 10 percent in rural areas living on 15 Rs (USD 0.24) and on Rs 20 (USD 0.32) in urban areas.²

The constitution guarantees the right to vote for everyone over the age of 18 and elections are highly contested. The constitution also provides the foundation for a new social order based on social and gender equality. However, the lives of many people, especially the rural poor, are still defined by their gender and the caste system which assigns each person a place in the social hierarchy. These placements form their perspectives, limit their opportunities, and affect their interest in participating in the democratic processes. For instance, a recent survey found that those with higher levels of education, income and social status were more satisfied with democracy, ranging from 73 percent satisfied for those with graduate degrees to 36 percent for those without education. A third of all persons surveyed believed that Indians do not have equal rights nor are free to speak their views and opinions.³

The caste system affects a large number of persons--- 41 percent of the population is characterized as "Other Backward Classes" (OBC) with another 20 percent classified as "Scheduled Castes" (SC) otherwise known as "Dalits" or previously as "untouchables".⁴ The disparity among castes is also noted on the UNDP Human Development Index-- the Index rate is 29 percent lower for SC and 54 percent lower for Scheduled Tribes (ST) than for the non SC/ST communities.⁵

There is a high concentration of Scheduled Castes in the Bundelkhand region where the project was located. There are also some of the tribal communities recognized by the government as disadvantaged and classified as Scheduled Tribes. Within the region there is active caste discrimination, violence and exploitation of the lower castes at the hands of upper caste persons although this has been decreasing over the past decade or more. The unequal distribution of resources and assets, particularly land, makes these groups economically vulnerable.

² The Economic Times, *60% of rural Indians live on less than Rs 20 a day*

³ Asia Barometer, *The State of Democratic Governance in India*, pps 3 and 4

⁴ Times of India, *OBCs form 41% of population: Survey*

⁵ UNDP, *India Factsheet, Gender and Social Exclusion Indicators*

There is a large gender gap within India, with women from lower castes and tribes especially vulnerable. According to the World Bank, girls have lower attendance rates than boys at primary and secondary schools, and there is a gender gap of almost five years of schooling for those at the bottom of the income scale. The literacy rate in India is 75 percent, but in the project region of Uttar Pradesh (UP), it is only 70 percent. Within UP, the male literacy rate is 79 percent, but for girls it is only 59 percent. Within the SC, the literacy rate is only 50 percent and for the ST, 47 percent.⁶ Men are the decision makers, and a 2007 survey found that only 25 percent of the respondents believed that a woman should be able to choose her own husband.

Rape and other crimes against women are serious problems and lower caste and tribal women are particularly vulnerable. The government enacted significant legal reforms after the fatal gang rape of a woman on a Delhi bus in 2012 but less publicized rape investigations and trials still lag nationwide. From 2005-2006, 37 percent of married women 15 to 49 are thought to have been physically or sexually abused by their husbands.⁷ There is a perceived culture of complicity where most rapes go unreported as this could bring shame onto the victims and their families.

India has a pluralistic and active media sector. It is considered among the freest in South Asia, but some journalists, especially in conflict or rural areas face challenges including occasional violence and legal actions. India is one of the few countries where the print media is still a vibrant and financially sustainable growth industry and it has rising numbers of both print and broadcast media outlets that cater to national or different regional and linguistic audiences. Most print and broadcast media are privately owned and provide diverse coverage and critical reporting on government. Newspapers are sold below cost of production which helps ensure wider access to the papers than in other low income countries. There are practices of demanding payment for coverage, and of national and state governments reportedly rewarding favourite news outlets with advertisements. There is often also a blurring of the lines between the editorial and advertising departments.⁸

In the northern states covered by the project-funded survey, 58 percent of the persons interviewed said they read a newspaper. However, 74 percent of the female respondents and 76 percent of the ST respondents did not. About half the women had access to a newspaper, but this was dependent on the newspaper coming into their home or to a neighbour. Sixty percent of male readers said they accessed the newspaper in a market, tea stall or elsewhere. Most readers read the newspapers in Hindi as less than one percent said a local language newspaper existed in their area. Only 19% of the respondents said they read the paper daily and only 1.6 percent said news from their locality was printed regularly in paper.⁹

Most persons said their main source of information was from their neighbours and family (74 percent) although almost half the respondents (43 percent) owned televisions and 82 percent had mobile phones. Six percent said they depended on the internet for news. Internet use is rising in India, with 13 percent of the population in 2012 on line, but this has so far largely bypassed rural India. Facebook is the leading social network with Twitter used by journalists, celebrities and politicians. Mobile phones were said to be increasing as a means to gather and disseminate news and information, especially in rural areas with low literacy rates.¹⁰

⁶ UNDP, *Uttar Pradesh, Economic and Human Development Indicators*

⁷ Freedom House, *India's Democracy Challenge, and Modi's*

⁸ Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press, India 2013*

⁹ UDF-IND-10-382, *The Spread of Media in Rural Uttar Pradesh, A Study in 10 districts, April-May 2012, A Report,*

¹⁰ BBC, *India Facts*

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

With this project, Nirantar Trust intended to empower rural women to create, shape and access information in order to strengthen their participation in the democratic processes and functioning of democratic institutions. Although India had already incorporated many of the essential elements of democracy, the Trust felt this process excluded women, and in particular, women from marginalized communities such as minorities, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and left them without a voice. A contributing factor to this was their limited access to information especially in rural areas. A 2006 survey, for example, had found that 81 percent of rural readers had no access to a newspaper¹¹ and that rural issues were not included in mainstream news.

In particular, Nirantar Trust intended this project to address the:

- **Lack of appropriate published materials for rural audiences** as the mainstream newspapers were done primarily for the urban centers and bigger towns;
- **Lack of innovative skill development for women in development programmes** and their promotion of gender stereotypical activities;
- **Lack of forums for exchanges between journalists** in rural areas which could help support the work of rural women journalists; and,
- **Sidelining of issues related to development and governance at the rural level** and the lack of exposure of journalism students in mainstream journalism courses to rural issues and realities.

Nirantar Trust expected to address these problem areas by training rural women from Scheduled Castes, backward and minority communities to act as journalists in their districts and to cover local issues for the KL newspaper editions. This effort had started in 2002, and was already operating in two districts of Uttar Pradesh Province (Banda and Chitrakoot) and one in Bihar Province (Sitamarhi). Eight women from each district were producing and distributing this weekly publication to 4,500 subscribers who paid Rs. 2 per copy. The KL editions covered local, national and international news and were intended to promote reading, access to printed material, and the accountability and transparency of the state.

This UNDEF-funded effort was developed to continue support to the Khabar Lahariya effort. In particular, this project intended to:

- **Train a skilled pool of 30 rural women journalists** from marginalized communities to cover development and other local issues in the KL editions in Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba and Sitamarhi districts. Training was to be done by workshops on writing, editing, photography and use of computers, and through mentoring.
- **Create a bilingual website for all editions of Khabar Lahariya** which before had only been on distributed on newspaper. This website was expected to extend the reach of the KL paper by providing Hindi and English versions of key articles, reference materials on the KL effort, space for Hindi discussions on community/rural journalisms, and to provide a networking platform for journalists.

¹¹ UNDF-IND-10-382, *Project Document*, p 2

- **Establish a rural news bureau in Mahoba district** where the women trained from Mahoba would issue a weekly edition of the paper and gain experience in news production and distribution. This was to include setting up a system for rural marketing and distribution for their edition and the signing up of 1,000 subscribers.
- **Expand the exposure of the KL newspaper and rural women reporters** to the mainstream media and journalism students **and develop a network of rural women journalists** by undertaking an annual state level visit to mainstream journalists and media houses, and by holding a network meeting of 100 rural women journalists.
- **Develop a learning module on grassroots media and women** to be conducted in five journalism schools. This was intended to increase the students' exposure to KL and on the issues facing rural journalism.

Introducing rural journalism into mainstream journalism was expected to expand the impact of the newspaper while the use of local language was expected to increase the awareness of the rural populations on development and governance issues. Informed citizens then could make their government more responsive and accountable. The intended outcomes for this project were: the (i) increased capacity and participation of women in rural media in three districts in the Bundelkhand area of northern India (Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba); (ii) increased access to news media in three districts in the Bundelkhand area of north India (Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba); and, (iii) stronger links between mainstream and rural journalists and including rural realities and the issues of marginalized communities in mainstream media.

There were a number of assumptions underlying the project strategy. This included being able to find women in rural areas with basic literacy skills and mobility who could be mobilized as journalists, and that some of these women would have basic computer skills who could be trained in ICT. It also assumed that enough of these women would take on the establishment of a Mahoba KL edition and would contribute to other editions of the paper. Nirantar Trust also expected that the local civil society and journalists would support the effort and would help to establish and stabilize the Mahoba KL bureau. They also anticipated that the Mahoba edition would be interesting enough for 1,000 readers to subscribe to it and that the mainstream media and media institutes would be interested in addressing and understanding rural realities and concerns. Given the sparse infrastructure in some of the areas, the project also assumed that enough computer equipment and electricity would be available to allow for the on-line activities.

Nirantar Trust also identified some risks for the project. Women from marginalized communities were seen as being highly vulnerable to social pressure and resistance to the idea of them acting as journalists. This could hinder the team efforts as well as the individual women from being able to report on news and distribute the newspaper. The project intended to mitigate this risk by using a team of women trained previously who were working on other KL editions as models and mentors along with project staff located at the state level who would regularly visit the new project area. Low levels of literacy among potential readers was also a risk which the Trust intended to mitigate by using simple language in the newspaper and by undertaking promotional activities to reach readers in remote rural areas.

There was also the risk that mainstream media would not support the KL efforts and that few journalism students would want to intern with it. The grantee intended to generate interest by expanding the KL edition to Mahoba district which it felt would give the KL effort a more significant presence in the region. It hoped to gain the support of more senior and socially aware journalists to help create space for the KL edition, and who could follow up on stories

reported by it. Organizing a networking event was also seen as a way to raise interest in the effort by raising its visibility and sharing its information.

Sustainability of the newspaper was an issue identified in the Project Document. Nirantar Trust intended to encourage its journalists to apply for fellowships in media and development and expected that high community demand would lower the cost per unit for the newspaper. It also felt that subscriptions and advertisements could cover 20 percent of the total costs of each edition.

(ii) Logical framework



Increased capacity and participation of women in rural media in three districts (Banda, Chitrakoot and Mahoba)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 women journalists trained (3 workshops) • 30 women journalists trained in ICT (workshops) • Bilingual website for all KL editions created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to serve as journalists on 4 KL editions • Ability to create Hindi on-line content • Bilingual website with KL content and networking capacity available for journalist and reader use 	<p>Increased number of rural women engaged in reporting of local issues</p> <p>Increased access for rural populations to local news</p> <p>Increased awareness of rural population on governance and accountability issues</p>	<p>Empowered rural women</p> <p>More attention paid to issue of marginalized rural communities and populations</p> <p>More accountable officials</p>
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Increased access to news media in three districts (Banda, Chitrakoot and Mahoba)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment on nature of rural media • Establish a rural news bureau in Mahoba • Market and distribute new edition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding on the availability and nature of rural media in Bundelkhand • 72 weekly Mahoba KL editions published • 1,000 subscribers for Mahoba KL edition 	<p>Increased availability of news in region</p> <p>More attention by local officials on rural community issues</p>	<p>Increased access to information in region</p> <p>Increased responsiveness and accountability of local officials</p> <p>Increased voice and democratic participation for rural and marginalized populations</p>
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Stronger linkages between mainstream and rural journalists and inclusion of rural realities/issues of marginalized communities in mainstream media

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual exposure visit of KL journalists • Survey on participation of women journalists in 4 Hindi speaking states • Learning module on grassroots media developed/conducted • One network meeting of rural women journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase exposure of rural women journalists to mainstream media and vice versa and development of a network of women reporters • Better understanding of women journalists in 4 Hindi speaking states • Increased understanding and coverage of rural issues and reports in mainstream media 	<p>Increased availability of local news in region and more national attention on rural issues</p> <p>Increased voice for rural communities</p> <p>More attention paid to issues of rural and marginalized communities outside of region</p>	<p>Rural issues and reporting mainstreamed into regular news</p> <p>Fewer marginalized communities and groups</p> <p>More accountability officials</p>
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IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The project was directly relevant to the mandate of the grantee, Nirantar Trust, which focuses on issues of gender and education. Nirantar had created Khabar Lahariya (Bundeli for “News Waves”) in 2002 after participating women in a literacy project in Chitrakoot wanted to continue with writing. Nirantar saw this as a way to fill the information gap in remote areas as well as a means to empower local women and their communities. Nirantar subsequently expanded its activity to nearby Banda district and to Sitamarhi district in Bihar Province.

This project design focused on extending the KL effort to Mahoba District and on-line. Mahoba was an appropriate choice for the paper expansion as it was adjacent to the existing KL centers (Figure 1) and could easily use the expertise and mentoring of the women already working in those locations. Expanding the efforts to an on-line edition also appeared to be relevant as it provided a mechanism to tie together all of the KL editions and extend the reach of the project beyond its physical locations.

The field activities in the design were focused on recruiting and training the new women for Mahoba and reinforcing the training of women from existing editions, especially in ICT which would be needed for the networking and on-line newspaper activities. The ICT training also appeared directly relevant to the interests of many of the women reporters who subsequently used the skills to open their own personal e-mail, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Other activities (exchanges and networking forum) were intended to link the KL effort with the mainstream media to both support the women’s efforts as well as to provide a follow-up for the stories reported. If implemented as intended, this could provide synergistic programming and activities that would increase the relevance of the newspaper and the effectiveness of the project.

The design activities were also directly relevant to the objectives of the project and in line with the needs to strengthen the democratic participation of rural communities and women in the northern regions of India. Although India has a well-established democracy, the caste system and historical discrimination remain embedded. Women and marginalized groups remain isolated from mainstream democratic participation by social status, geography, education level and language which limit their voice and role. Hindi, which is used by the government, schools and national press, is a second language for many in the region. Although India has a vibrant and pluralistic press, the independent press is constrained by the highly competitive media market that is dominated by conglomerates and partisan press. These pay scant attention to the issues and needs of small towns and marginalized persons. In addition, journalism is predominately a male occupation and bringing women into the profession can help to broaden its perspective as well as its reach.

At the same time, the KL subscription levels were low within the areas covered, with about 65 to 75 regular subscribers per edition according to the subscriber lists provided by the

Figure 1: Location of project activities



Source: Maps of India

project. Some of the reader groups targeted by the project expressed preference during the evaluation interviews for other types of newspapers, with the KL seen as something they would like to read as a second newspaper.

(ii) Effectiveness

Project implementation delivered most of the anticipated outputs, but the focus of the grantee shifted from expanding the KL editions to one additional district (Mahoba) to three additional districts (Mahoba, Faizabad and Varanasi). Although the Nirantar Trust said it used other donor funding to cover the publication costs for the other editions, this stretched the KL activities over a much larger area than anticipated in the UNDEF project design.¹² The rapid expansion increased the KL footprint within the region, but likely reduced the amount of attention that the Mahoba efforts would have otherwise received. In particular, in the number of women recruited and trained from Mahoba, the reach of the Mahoba edition, the amount of attention paid to its marketing and distribution, and the subsequent use and follow up of the news reports which was needed to generate the higher level democratic outcomes sought by the project.



Second ICT workshop in Lucknow
Photo: KL Facebook

According to project reporting, 15 women were recruited and trained in Mahoba as they had difficulty in retaining participants because of societal and family pressures. However, according to the training participant lists, seven women from Mahoba received training out of a total of 74 women from 10 different locations (Figure 2). This is more than double the project target of 30 trainees. A few of these women moved from one location to another during the project period as Nirantar Trust encouraged some of the more experienced

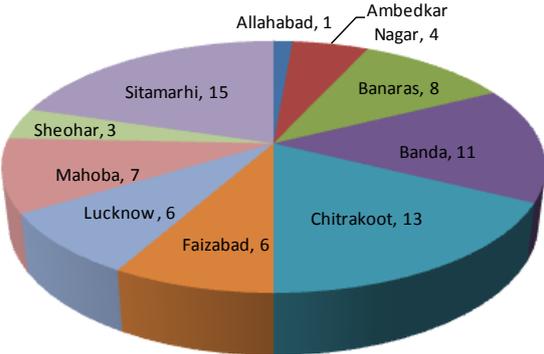


Figure 2: Number and locations of KL trainees

women from the older editions to work in the new locations in order to mentor and help produce the newer editions. But the higher training numbers also reflect the expansion of the activities to the additional districts and the need to train the journalists for those editions.

Using experienced KL reporters to mentor the new reporters was likely an effective way to train the new recruits as most of the learning, especially for those with lower educational levels, was probably done by doing. Having the continued presence of veteran reporters to guide the development

of the new editions would have been an invaluable asset. It also helped ensure continuing

¹² The programme description text in the Project Document refers to participants from four districts for training, while the results framework table lists participants from only three districts. The 4th district was Sitamarhi which Nirantar Trust said they intended to include in the trainings.

employment opportunities and career growth for some of the women from the earlier KL efforts.

There is no data available for training that would allow for an assessment of its effectiveness in transferring knowledge and skills, or in terms of empowering the participants. However, from the anecdotal information collected during the evaluation, the women reporters seemed adequately trained for the work they were expected to perform. Mainstream reporters at the district level felt the women reporters had an innate ability to identify news and report on it and the women reporters interviewed seemed confident of being able to cover and report on local stories. KL did have a centralized publishing system in place where project staff, some of whom had been professional journalists, finalized each edition. This also served as a quality control mechanism for the papers in addition to fleshing the editions out with the sections on national and international news. Many of the local media community interviewed (who were all males) believed the KL journalists had an edge in reporting issues directly affecting women.



Susheela, a KL reporter from Banda covering a story on public distribution system in April 2013.
Photo: Bini Philips

Apart from the introductory courses, most of the project-funded training focused on computer and ICT training. Three of the seven Mahoba women attended the ICT courses which seemed to be a favorite among the participants. A good percentage of the women interviewed said that they now used e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. As the KL newspaper editions are done on computer in each location and the contents sent to Delhi by e-mail, some knowledge of computer basics, and the use of the internet, is essential for KL production. The biggest problem for the rural women with ICT was access to electricity as it was on only a few hours every day in the district capital. This was needed to charge the computers located in the KL offices and their mobile phones-- which all of the women seem to have. The ICT training seemed extremely practical and showed the women how to use their phones to take photos for their stories which they could then download when they were at the local KL office. Not all the women had smart phones and the Point of View, the implementing partner for the ICT component, felt that one of the lessons learned from the project was that it should have budgeted for smart phones

Figure 3

Placement of News in Khabar Lahariya Editions

Front page	Major news from the area, often related to accidents, calamities, crime, etc.
Page 2	News from villages
Page 3	News from towns and cities
Page 4	News related to women’s issues
Page 5	News from the district/state/zone
Page 6	National/international news
Page 7	Recreational and sports news
Page 8	Two analytical articles on social policy/trends; letter to the editor

which could have provided for more versatility and efficiency for the project as the reporters could then use their phones for their on-line research, to take photos and to send their reports directly to the office, rather than having to travel there to do this on the office computer.

The newspaper editions themselves average about 32 news items per paper, with the distribution of news among the pages as shown in Figure 3. The papers focus on rural issues, with the news on pages two and three usually on problems in service delivery such as dysfunctional sub-health centres, badly functioning housing schemes or problems with the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. More than 50 percent of the news on pages four and five highlight the challenges to implementing development schemes and programmes meant for the rural poor. Thus, up to 75 percent of the news is on the problems and challenges in the delivery of local services.

The Mahoba edition started in 2012 and appeared to be published regularly. Its first four pages and the letters to the editor are usually in the Bundeli language with the remainder in Hindi. The tone of the newspaper seemed balanced, including news items on violence against women (VAW). Even articles on topics at odds with cultural values, such as a cross-dressing man who danced professionally as a woman, were presented in a balanced manner. Nirantar Trust said it wanted to draw a line between activism and reporting and ensured it covered all sides to avoid being labeled as partisan. At the same time, these



KL production meeting
Photo: Disha Mulick

stories give visibility to problems and reports on what is not being done. This objective reporting and focus on issues is an achievement as much of the commercial media in India is sensationalized, partisan or focused on personalities rather than issues.

The KL reporters themselves appeared to have developed a cordial relationship with local officials and other reporters. The local officials interviewed knew the women and the newspaper, with the local magistrate saying it was useful to cover local incidents and report on court judgments. The local mainstream reporters also said the KL reporters had access to village level news which was beyond their reach, and they sometimes followed up on issues raised by the women, although this did not appear to be done on any systematic basis.

Figure 4	
Use of the KL on-line edition 12/14	
Total Visits	6,570
Bounce rate	70.18%
Pages per visit	2.70
% new visitors	83.4%
Weekly visitors	392
Average duration	3:36 min 3/13 2:12 min 12/14
Source of visitors	India: 68.36% Spain: 11% US: 8.66%

The reach of the newspapers is unknown. The KL website cites a figure of 80,000 readers per week across 600 villages in 9 districts for all KL editions. However, there seems to be a very low number of regular subscribers. Publication runs vary from 2,000 for Banda to 500 for Mahoba, but without an end use survey, it is not possible to determine how many persons actually read the newspaper or how the content impacted the issues, persons and localities covered. The reach of the printed papers also seemed to be extremely localized. Veteran journalists interviewed in the district adjacent to Mahoba were unaware of KL or its efforts.

Calls to 14 persons listed as subscribers revealed that the majority purchase the newspaper because it was written in the local language which they wanted to help sustain, and because they wanted to support the women's reporting efforts. Several commented about the quality of the language and its mixture with Hindi which they thought should be eliminated. Most said they hoped it could become a daily paper and, along with the mainstream reporters interviewed, suggested the papers make some improvements in coverage and layout to increase circulation.

The grantee did create an on-line edition of the KL paper through the work of its implementing partner Point of View. This site publishes some of the more interesting articles from each district edition in its original language. Although about five percent of the articles are translated into English and Hindi (about 5-6 articles a week), the grantee found translation to be too labor intensive to do more. About 5 - 10 percent of the newspaper articles are put on line and these seem to be uploaded on a regular and timely basis. Roughly 1,800 persons visit the site monthly, and about 30 percent of these visit two or more pages before leaving (Figure 4).

Nirantar Trust also started an e-mail version of the paper which it sends out regularly to a national and international mailing list of about 500 persons. According to Nirantar, about 26 percent of these persons are associated with media outlets, 15 percent are from NGOs and 10 percent are students and researchers. In addition, it created a separate website with information on the KL effort which it uses for informational purposes. Although there was no

"I think KL is a fantastic project. I have sent my students to stay with them and work with them. The students came back greatly enthused by the experience and made several stories and videos out there. These are all students of an urban background. I believe the project can help build networks between mainstream journalism and rural journalists-within the limits imposed by the structure and nature of our hyper-commercialized mainstream media.... I have interacted with the journalists of KL and hold those I met in very high regard."

P. Sainath, Working Journalist and Journalism Teacher

information on any follow-up done on the local issues disseminated through the on-line editions, Nirantar Trust has been effective in marketing its KL effort. Khabar Lahariya has been the recipient of numerous national and international awards (Figure 5) and the Nirantar Trust has successfully raised funds to continue its KL operations for more than a decade. The KL effort also has its own Facebook page with 2,010 likes and a Twitter account with 1,229 followers.

The networking activities anticipated in the project document with other women reporters seemed limited to the one workshop held at the end of the project and to the exchanges done with journalism schools. The journalism professors interviewed felt the efforts were extremely effective, with students gaining a new found respect for rural issues and the difficulties faced by the women reporters. The KL

- Figure 5**
Khabar Lahariya Awards and Recognition
- The Bobs Global Media Forum Award, 5/14
 - Special Mention for KL Journalism in Mahoba District by district journalists 5/14
 - Marco Innovation Award, 3/14
 - Kaifi Azim International Award, 5/13
 - Special Mention for Hamirpur edition by the Bundelkhand Journalists' Organization 5/13
 - Times Now Amazing Indian Award, 1/13
 - Laadi Media Award for Gender Sensitive Reporting, 12/12
 - Mahindra Spark the Rise Challenge, 11/12
 - UNESCO King Sejong Award for Literacy, 2009
 - Women's World Summit Foundation Award for Creativity in Rural Life, 2009
 - Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Woman Mediapersons, 2004

reporters learned more about newspaper production and reporting from their visits to Mumbai and Chitrakoot. The KL reporters did seem to know their male counterparts within their localities from covering some of the same stories, but the relationships did not appear to go much beyond that. The male reporters did not see the women as competitors, saying the KL reporters covered more village news and local issues than they covered through the newspapers, radio or television shows.

(iii) Efficiency

Nirantar Trust had developed the KL model ten years before the start of this UNDEF-funded project and had refined its recruitment, training, reporting and publication activities over that period. This allowed the project then to start up within a relatively short period of time.

The production of the newspaper appeared to be efficient given the local conditions and isolated nature of some of the communities. The layout was standardized across editions (Figure 3) and the labour was divided between the project staff in Delhi which created the four pages of national and international news, and the field offices which produced the four pages of local news. They exchanged the content by e-mail and completed the layout and editing from Delhi. Nirantar recently partnered with the Hindustan newspaper to print the newspaper at their printing press, this provided a better quality newspaper and reduced the cost. They also started to piggy-back on their wider distribution network and hope that some of their agents will start to distribute the KL editions.



KL participant

Photo: Poorvi Bhargava

Training and mentoring was also done from within the core group of KL women, some of whom were Delhi-based project staff and the remainder in the regions with experience in producing the older editions. All KL women receive a regular salary which helps them to become independent and ensures their continued participation.

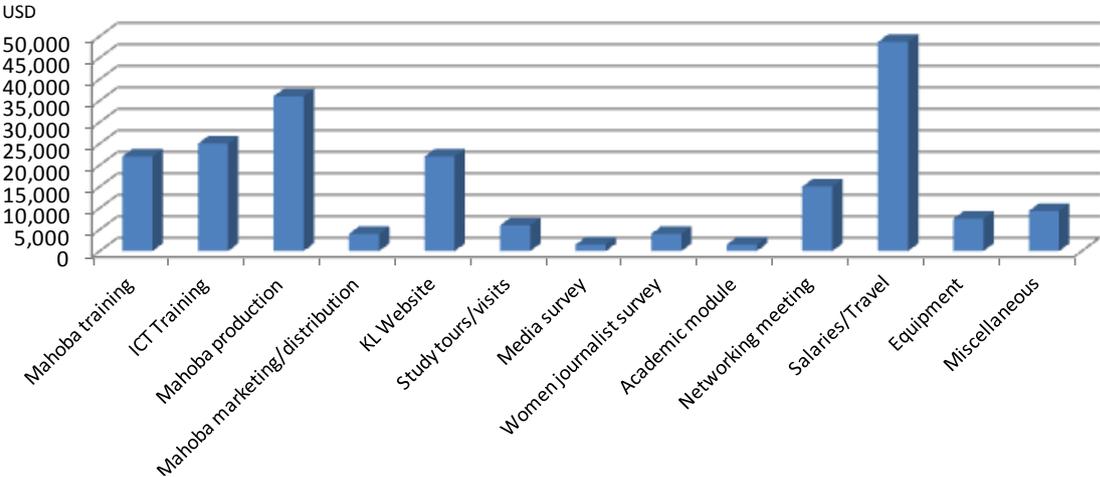
The KL reporters for Mahoba seemed to be recruited through personal connections although some advertising appears to have been done. Most said they were advised of the opportunity from one of the existing KL reporters or through a local NGO person who had an affiliation with Nirantar. The KL mentors said they had received numerous applications from a variety of women and gave preference to those from lower castes and educational levels. The women interviewed did seem to come from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds. Some of the women interviewed had only completed 8th grade, while others had Master's degrees, some of which they finished while working for earlier KL editions according to Nirantar.

New reporters went through a seven day course on rural journalism done at the district level and a three day writing course. Most also attended the basic computer class with those with more aptitude and computer knowledge going to the six part ICT course. With the exception of the mentors, all were expected to report on the news as well as to produce and distribute the newspaper. This reduced the number of persons needed to produce each edition, but at

the same time it over-extended some of the participants and limited the opportunities for the women to specialize in one area or another. This was especially noted by some of the student interns and the mentors who felt they were over-stretched. The rapid expansion in the number of editions also limited the ability of the project to go into more depth with the project-funded efforts. Nirantar Trust felt in retrospect that the marketing and distribution aspects of the newspaper suffered, but they also believed that expanding the number of the KL editions is the right path for the model.

The use of the project budget was consistent with the delivery of the outputs, but not with the project’s intended outcomes. To achieve those higher level results, more systematic follow-up efforts would have been needed for networking, marketing and for the stories reported on in the newspapers. It would have also required more investigatory journalism at the local levels than the women appeared comfortable doing or could likely be expected to do given their status and social vulnerability.

Figure 6: Project Expenditures



The operating costs for the Mahoba edition (recruiting/training/production/distribution) took about a third of the project budget (Figure 6). The move towards ICT (training and website) took about 23 percent of the budget. The cost for project staff and their travel used about a quarter of the budget. It is difficult to extract exact costs for Mahoba as most of the trainings included women from other editions.

Nirantar Trust did have substantial levels of funding from other sources, including the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust in Mumbai that provided about USD 200,000 that it reported using to publish the other editions. Nirantar also said that the journalism students from Mumbai who visited the KL operations paid their own way, although this event was used as a Milestone event for UNDEF. None of the Milestones were observed by third parties, with Nirantar Trust completing the milestone reports itself although they were subsequently reviewed and completed by UNDEF as an UNDEF report. Nirantar Trust also appeared to use specialized organizations for different aspects of the project, such as Point of View for the ICT work and Innovation Alchemy to develop a sustainability plan for the newspaper.

“In the village, there is no chance to touch a computer, but I heard the computer was a window to the world and to information. Open and close a file is not interesting, but the internet is a huge thing. I can find anything and I found a new world.”
 “The family and social codes mean that women don’t talk to other men. But I wanted to talk to others. As a reporter, I can now talk to anyone, even the police, and I enjoy it.”

KL reporters, Mahoba

Nirantar Trust did provide timely reporting to UNDEF. With the exception of the newspaper editions, project products were well branded with the UNDEF logo. The project also required a three month no-cost time extension. Nirantar said this was necessary as they wanted to finish the survey of women journalists before holding the networking meeting where they wanted to launch the report.

(iv) Impact

Results level data was not collected by the project, but from the anecdotal information gathered, it is likely that this project:

- ***Helped break the stereotypical vision of a woman's role within the areas covered*** by the new KL editions. These regions have a traditional male dominated culture, a very hierarchical caste system and limited opportunities for women, especially those from lower castes and with limited education. News reporting is traditionally a male occupation, especially for field reporters, and having women regularly out and about reporting on news and distributing newspapers put an unconventional face on news and provided an alternative role model for those within their communities.
- ***Opened new opportunities for some women*** who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to expand their education and perspective. Working on the paper provided exposure to other things and a sense of financial security to participants that then enabled them to do other things, such as finish their education or attend graduate school. For these less educated women, the ICT training was also empowering. Having access to the internet and the information available on the internet opened a whole new world for them and allowed them to share their experiences with others. The use of Facebook, Twitter and e-mail gave them the freedom to express themselves and share their experiences with others.



KL Participants 2013

Photo:KL Facebook

- ***Provided a sense of identity for the women participants beyond their caste, sex and education.*** All of the women felt the training and work on the newspaper provided them with a professional sense of identity as a journalist rather than as the sister or wife of someone. This was liberating for some of the

women, especially the ones with lower levels of education. They felt empowered and able to talk to others including public officials, police officers and male readers of the newspaper. As an example, during the evaluation the police in Mahoba had an assembly to celebrate human rights day. The KL reporters waded into the middle of the group to take photos and talk to officers. It is doubtful that any of the women

would have done this without the KL effort.

- **Increased the confidence and self-respect of the women participants**, especially those with the lower levels of education. The women themselves felt respected when they were out working and were able to go into a village and report on a problem. They also had to distribute their newspaper to men who are the primary purchasers of the newspapers and, as part of this, had to ask them for payment. This took a good deal of confidence and they felt it generated the respect of the men. Some of the KL reporters also reported on some risky issues such as illegal mining and violence against women which showed the local population that these women could equally take risks to cover good stories and the reporters themselves believed that their coverage strengthened their local governance and political processes. This in turn provided a sense of empowerment and of contributing to the development of grass roots democracy.
- **Raised awareness of mainstream media on the importance of news in the villages** as the other journalists in the KL district capitals did seem to follow the KL news and re-reported some of the stories through their own outlets. Mainstream journalists felt that all newspapers had access to district level news, but not to news at the village level although this is changing over time. The online edition and the e-mailed version also helped raise the awareness of effort with other media, civil society groups and with others in India and abroad.
- **Gave a voice to the traditional minority and raised their issues beyond the local level.** The KL stories of problems of the rural poor and of issues affecting women, especially issues of violence against women, which often goes unreported by mainstream press, gave voice to victims and the powerless. As the KL reporters were from these areas and returned each week with the newspapers, the villagers could see that their stories were being reported. They felt that other reporters who came never returned and they did not know if they had published their stories.
- **Resulted in some improvements in local service delivery and living conditions** for the marginalized groups and rural poor. The extent of this is unknown because of the lack of data, and is likely limited without more systematic links between the KL editions and others, such as government agencies or NGOs which could have followed up on problems identified, but the reporters did report on problems within the villages, VAW and on shady activities, such as illegal mining and gambling. Some of these were filmed and posted on the KL website and You Tube. Some of the anecdotal reports from Mahoba and Banda of changes made as a result of a KL story included the improvement in a local health center after a local health official noted a KL story on high levels of malnutrition of children in one village; the repair of a village well after the report of a broken pump and the lack of potable water; and resuming public distributions of food rations within one community after a report that the distributors were hoarding the supplies for themselves.

“It is very surprising that in such a backwards district that ladies come forward to do this job. It is good to have a paper in local language, this is important. The people are so poor but they can understand the local language. “

Local Official Mahoba

Impact beyond this is difficult to assess as the project did not collect the type of data needed to assess results beyond outputs. A baseline was done at the start of the project on the need for news in rural areas but was not repeated at the end to see whether the Mahoba or other KL editions then filled the informational gap and needs found within those rural localities. It also did not do a mapping of the actual reach and use of the newspaper editions. This type of information could have helped the project better target its interventions to ensure that the newspaper was reaching the intended audience, that the information was then being used to address the problems uncovered, and was strengthening the democratic institutions and processes.



KL distribution in Fazabad 12/12

Photo: Poorvi Bhargava

Attribution of results to this project is also difficult as the project was the continuation of a decade-long effort undertaken by Nirantar Trust with Khabar Lahariya. Many of the project participants were women who had worked on those earlier editions. About half the women interviewed in Mahoba already had Masters' Degrees in Political Science, and at least a third had worked previously on the Banda edition. Most of these saw the KL effort as an employment opportunity, although Nirantar Trust said that the financial stability provided by their KL employment had enabled some of these women to complete their education and attend graduate school since their recruitment. Thus, the higher level of education could have been a result of the earlier KL experience for some. Two of these ladies had become trustees in the new organization created to manage KL, the Women, Media and News (WoMeN) Trust which was created during the project's lifespan.

(v) Sustainability

The KL model as outlined in the UNDEF project document is not sustainable. The effort started as a project to empower women and provided training and employment to the women through producing a newspaper. These newspapers did run some advertisements, but this with their limited subscriptions and low selling cost only provide about 20 percent of the costs of producing the paper. With only two percent of the project budget dedicated for marketing and distributing the Mahoba edition, it ended up with a very limited number of subscribers and a print run of only 500 copies which are sold for Rs 2 each (USD 0.03). To attract more readers and advertisers it will need to scale up its visibility and circulation within the district.

**Figure 7
Status of Khabar Lahariya Editions (12/14)**

Edition	Launch	Number Team members	Number copies distributed weekly
Chitrakoot	2002	7	2,500
Banda	2006	7	1,500
Sitamarhi	2010	7	1,000
Mahoba	2012	4	500
Faizabad	2012	6	700
Banaras (production paused)	2012	3	500

When the project was designed, Nirantar Trust was concerned that seeking more advertising would create demands to change the nature of the KL paper and therefore did not pursue a business model for their KL efforts. Instead it looked for donor support. It has since changed

its approach and is looking at ways to create a financially viable newspaper. It created a separate organization to manage the KL in 2013, WoMeN Trust. Two of the original KL women reporters who served as mentors under this project were given board positions as Trustees along with the original Nirantar Trust creators of the effort.

The Trust engaged a professional consulting firm to look at the business aspects for KL who helped them develop a ten-year strategic vision. This foresees developing a media collective with a large expansion of the KL effort to 20 or 25 editions, training another 300 women to create a critical mass, doubling the price of the newspaper and becoming sustainable in six years. They intend to separate out the training of the women which they would cover through donations and donor funding. The first sustainability workshop was done in May 2014 under the project and Nirantar continues to work with this firm to find a sustainable solution for Khabar Lahariya. Nirantar Trust also started a crowd sourcing donation campaign through social media which is helped by their own marketing efforts for KL. This has netted KL several celebrity endorsements and about USD 22,000 in donations, as well as its numerous awards.

At the time of the evaluation, all of the editions of Khabar Lahariya were still in regular publication (Figure 7) with the exception of the Banaras edition. Publication of this edition was suspended as Nirantar Trust wanted to focus on the Bundelkhand districts where they intended to re-launch KL in a bigger size format with more news. Once this new issue took off they expected to review and revive the work in Banaras.

It will be difficult to develop a fully sustainable model as many independent newspapers in India are not financially viable enterprises and their journalists are not on a regular salary. In addition, KL is working in an increasingly competitive space, even in remote villages. The mainstream press is coming out with regional editions in Hindi with stories from the villages highlighting issues of farmers, students and others. They also capture most of the commercial advertising. This all will affect KL's ability to run in the black.

(vi) UNDEF Value added

There was UNDEF-value added to the KL effort as newspapers are seen as political efforts which are not eligible for bilateral funding. UN funding also gives prestige to the effort and endorsement for the ideas of equality for women in the media profession and the employment of marginalized women as reporters. The provision of a substantial two-year grant also gave the KL effort enough financial security that enabled them to adopt a more rapid expansion policy.

IV. Conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, the team concludes:

(i) The project's intended outcomes are important and needed in the context, as providing a voice for marginalized and socially vulnerable populations and holding public officials accountable for their actions towards those populations are essential elements to bringing them into the democratic processes and ensuring gender equity. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(ii) The KL model provides a proven mechanism for the empowerment of the participating women and demonstrates that rural, marginalized women can undertake independent and professional work with mentoring and training. The extent of this empowerment however is unknown without pre and post measurements of its participants, but this is likely to be much greater for those with a more rural and less educated background than for the university level participants. The effectiveness of the KL model beyond the empowerment of participants is also unknown due to the lack of data. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(iii) The women who work on the KL editions are to be commended. They work in an extremely difficult environment and face physical and cultural constraints every day trying to cover the local stories and publish their newspaper. They are living role models who are breaking class and gender stereotypes. They are able to do this because of the support they receive from the mentors who had already gone through this evolution, and from the income received from their work on the paper. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness and impact.

(iv) The focus of the efforts among the different project objectives was not clear. Specifically whether it was to publish a newspaper that could then bring information to 'media dark' communities, generate democratic change and increase accountability within those communities, or if it was to use the newspaper as a tool to empower participating women and provide them with continuing employment. This **resulted in an activity-driven project** that lacked the systematic efforts, targeting and links needed to achieve the higher level democratic outcomes articulated in the project design. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

(v) The change of strategy from developing one new edition in Mahoba to opening three new editions within a year **diluted the amount of effort** that went into each edition **and limited the results** anticipated in the project document beyond the training of additional women and the publication of more newspaper editions. This shift also contributed to the activity-driven nature of project implementation. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, impact, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

(vi) The KL model as developed under the UNDEF-project is not sustainable as it attempts to do a gender empowerment and democratic development project through publishing a local language newspaper with limited circulation and

advertising. Without continued donor funding to cover the bulk of the participant's cost and the publication of the papers, this model cannot continue. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

(vii) The development of the website had limited local impact but is useful to raise the visibility of the KL effort and its issues to the national level and for marketing the project with donors and others. The website reaches a fair number of persons but their actual use of the website and its information is not tracked or known. Its use at the local level is limited by the lack of computer usage at that level and the existence of the paper product. This conclusion follows the findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact.

(viii) The project might have had more significant results than was visible to the evaluators, **but it is not possible to know as results beyond outputs were not tracked or measured.** The project's monitoring and evaluation plan was activity based and lacked the indicators and before/after measurements needed to better demonstrate its actual level of impact. This conclusion follows findings on impact.

V. Recommendations

To strengthen similar projects in the future, the team recommends:

(i) Identify a clear purpose for the KL effort in moving forward whether it be empowerment of the rural women, production of a newspaper, serving as a watchdog for rural communities or strengthening democratic development. This can help better target project interventions and inform the shape of the KL strategy moving into the future. Nirantar Trust appears to be moving towards the production of local language newspapers done by local women as the ultimate purpose for its activities. As a result, it could then strengthen its efforts for marketing and increasing the level of advertisements and circulation for its KL editions. This recommendation follows conclusions (iv), (v) and (vi).

(ii) Undertake a user survey and mapping exercise of the KL editions to determine their actual reach, number of readers, and the actual use of the information in the newspaper in making needed changes or correcting injustices. This should be done by a professional polling firm before continuing to expand the model and should cover the six KL areas and a representative sample of the anticipated readers (public officials, newspaper sellers, other journalists and urban/rural readers). This will better inform the programmatic elements for future efforts as well as the business plans currently under development. A separate user survey should also be developed for the on-line users with a link for the survey put within the KL website and on the KL electronic edition as well as within the on-line newspaper. This recommendation follows conclusions (v), (vi), (vii) and (viii).

(iii) Strengthen links with development agencies/efforts and NGOs to ensure more systematic follow up on the issues identified in the newspaper so that they can be addressed as well as to use the news reported to push the democratic development that increased information and news reports can bring. This recommendation follows conclusions (i), and (vii)

(iv) Continue the national and international marketing efforts through the KL website, on-line editions and social media to generate the national and international level support needed to subsidize the KL effort. This recommendation follows conclusions (vi) and (vii).

(v) Incorporate outcome indicators and measurement tools in future projects to track the results of the project activities as well as their outputs. For instance, adopt pre/post tests that can measure the change in knowledge of the participants. The empowerment of the participating women can be tracked through a knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) survey given at the time of their recruitment and then repeated annually to measure the level of change and personal/professional growth of the participant. Trainings should also include pre and post tests. This information not only helps to identify project results, but can help better target training initiatives and mentoring. This recommendation follows conclusions (ii), (iii), (v) (vii) and (viii).

VI. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

The KL model provided marginalized rural and lower caste women with the opportunity to become a respected member of the community in their own right. The training, exposure and income changed the lives of the participating women and especially those who were the most marginalized. Although it was not tracked, the new women recruited under the project had to have had a major change of attitude before and after the project, becoming more



Suneeta Prajapati in Kabrai and the mining quarry where she used to work *Photo: KI Facebook*

easily joked around with her male journalist counterparts and appeared to be one of the leaders of the Mahoba edition.

confident, self-assured and capable of asking questions and reporting on local issues and producing a local language newspaper.

An example of this has to be Suneeta Prajapati whom the evaluation team met in Mahoba. She had dropped out of school after the 8th grade and was working in a mining quarry as a child laborer before being recruited by the Khabar Lahariya efforts. Her sister reportedly died working in the mines. Now only 18, she talked with confidence and pride about being a reporter and covering stories. She

VIII. 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?

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Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

7 December 2014	
Arrival international consultant	
8 December 2014	
Disha Mullick	Project Coordinator, Nirantar Trust
Shalini Joshi	Director, Nirantar Trust
Sandhya Dwivedi	Project Associate, Nirantar Trust
Ajay Singh	Accounts Coordinator, Nirantar Trust
Soshama Mathai	Accountant, Nirantar Trust
Anant Zanane	Global Health Strategies, New Delhi by phone
Emily Polk	Stanford University, by e-mail
9 December 2014	
Bishakha Datta	Founder, Point of View, Mumbai, by phone
Parvathi Menon	Innovation Alchemy, Mumbai, by phone
Travel to Khajuraho, Bundelkhand Region	
Dr. Murad Ali	Correspondent, Dinik Bhaskar, Rajnagar, Khajuraho
Parsuram Rajkuar	Correspondent, HNN-MP, and Chattisgarh Channel
Rajendra Verma	Correspondent, Dainik Jargaran
10 December 2014	
Travel to Mahoba	
Meera Devi Verma	Joint Editor, Khabar Lahariya, Banda District
Gita Devi Gupta	Senior Reporter, Khabar Lahariya, Banda District
Meera Jatav	Chief Operation Officer, KL Chitrakoot District, Trustee WoMeN Trust
Kavita Kavita	Editor, Khabar Lahariya, Chitrakoot and Banda Districts, Trustee WoMen's Trust
Sunita Kotarya	Reporter, Khabar Lahariya, Banda District
Sobha Devi Kotarya	Reporter, Khabar Lahariya, Mahoba District
Sunita Prajapati	Reporter, Kabrai, Khabar Lahariya, Mahoba District
Shyamkali Kotarya,	Reporter, Khabar Lahariya, Mahoba District
Rupali Sribastav	Computer Operator and Accounts Officer, Khabar Lahariya, Chitrakoot and Banda Districts
Ram Kishore,	Superintendent of Police, Mahoba District
Ramayash Singh	Upper Superintendent of Police, Mahoba District
Rakesh Kumar Gupta	Sub Divisional Magistrate, Mahoba
Santosh Yadav	Bureau Chief, Hindustan newspaper, Mahoba
Hari Krishan Potdaar	Representative, United News of India, Mahoba
Nirdosh Khumar	Student, newspaper reader Mahoba
Swamy Patkar	News stall owner, Mahoba
Travel to Kabrai	
Arjit Kumar	Newspaper reader, Kabrai
Roshirni	Newspaper reader, Kabrai

Jeetenber Kumar	Newspaper reader, Kabrai
Kamlendra Singh	Sub Inspector, Police, Kabrai
Bishnu Narayan	Mining contractor, Kabrai
Chandra Sekhar Namdev	Reporter, Khabar First TV, Mahoba
Vinaya Soni,	Reporter, News State TV, Mahoba
Durgesh Singh Senger	Representative, Jansera Mail, Mahoba
11 December 2014	
Mehrun Siddique	Adhar Khajuraho, ROSHNI, Khajuraho
Afroze Begum	Adhar Khajuraho, ROSHNI, Khajuraho
Mehrun Siddique	Adhar Khajuraho, ROSHNI, Khajuraho
Mankuvar	Adhar Khajuraho
Pawan Singh Tomar	Sri Saibaba Seva Samiti, Khajuraho
Heena Bano	Khabar Lahariya, Faizabad District by phone
Lalita Dassi	Khabar Lahariya, Faizabad District by phone
Sanjay Singh	Secretary, Parmarth and Advisor, Prime Minister's Campaign Committee on Clean India by phone
Rizvana Tabassum	Khabar Lahariya, Varnasi edition by phone
Utkarsh Sinha	Editor, Awadhnama, Lucknow by phone
Saritha Thomas	Managing Trustee, People's Power Collective, Uttarakhand, by e-mail
Amrita Tripathi	Consultant Health Strategies, Delhi, by e-mail
Return to New Delhi	
12 December 2014	
Renuka Srinivasan	Senior Programme Manager, Development Cooperation, European Union
Subhalaxmi Nandi	Programme Specialist, Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women
Shalini Joshi	Director, Nirantar Trust
Disha Mullick	UNDEF project coordinator
Kavita Kavita	Trustee, WoMeN's Trust
Nirmita Gupta	Professor of Mass Communication, Sophia College, Mumbai by phone
14 - 29 December 2014	
Kiran Jatav	Training participant by phone
Sunita Prajapati	Training participant, Works in Khabar Lahariya, Mahoba by phone
Rupali Srivastav	Training participant, Now, works in Khabar Lahariya, Chitrakoot by phone
Seikh Mustakh	Subscriber, Makaniapura, Mahoba by phone
R.K.Pathak	Subscriber, Sahara India, Gandhi Nagar, Mahoba by phone
Arvind Agarwal	Subscriber, Mahoba by phone
Ramakant Kushwah	Subscriber, Yodhagini Nagar, Mahoba by phone
Bikalp kumar Prajapati	Subscriber, Banda Chouraha, Kabrai, Mahoba by phone
Maheswari	Subscriber, Indiranagar, Kabrai by phone
Dr. Hriday Mahan	Subscriber, Srinagar, Tigola, Jaitpur by phone
Ms. Rani	Subscriber, Belatal by phone

Ranju Khajanchi	Subscriber, Belatal by phone
Mrs. Jamila Bano	Subscriber, Secretary, Samajwadi Party, District Mahoba by phone
Bablu Sen	Subscriber, Main Market, Charkharai by phone
Rambabu Gupta	Subscriber, B.Park Chauraha, Charkhari by phone
Santosh Kumar Agarwal	Subscriber, Main Market, Kulpahad by phone
Feroze Khan	Subscriber, Bus Stand, Kulpahad by phone
P. Sainath	Senior Rural Affairs Journalist, Mumbai, by e-mail

Annex 4 : Acronyms

ICT	Information communications and technology
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes and practices
KL	Khabar Lahariya
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBC	Other Backward Caste
Rs	Rupees
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UP	Uttar Pradesh
USD	United States Dollar
VAW	Violence against women
WoMeN Trust	Women, media and News Trust