

Odyssey



Newsletter of PRI-CBO Convergence Project Kudumbashree NRO

What we do...

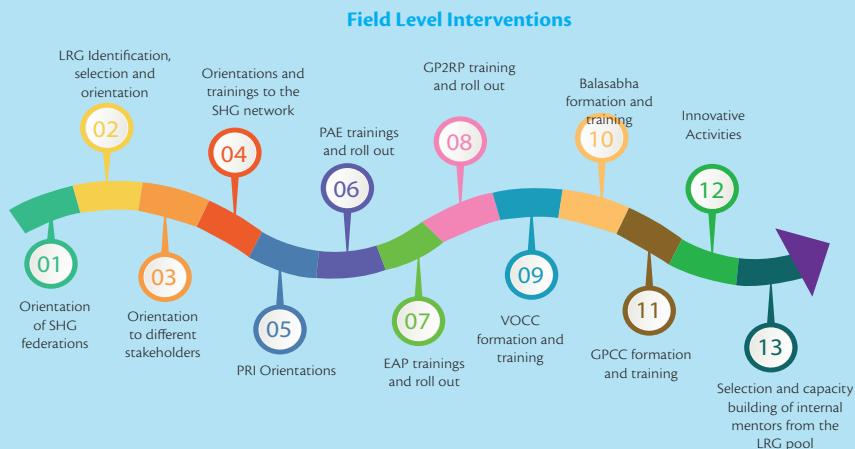
PRI-CBO Convergence project is an attempt to build synergies between the activities of local self government institutions and SHG network in working together for achieving the goals of local development. The project is conceptualised based on the premise that if both these institutions (Panchayati Raj institutions and Community Based Organisations) collaborate with each other to work for the development of the village, they can significantly enhance the livelihood and social security of the vulnerable and poor. The project aims at the empowerment of the rural poor using a right based approach. This model is based on Kerala's experience of NHG (Neighbourhood Group) network working closely with the Gram Panchayats (GPs). The pilots implemented in various states have helped develop a 'Proof of Concept' for universal implementation of this programme under NRLM. The project was initially piloted in 5 states of Assam, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Odisha and MoU in these states expired in 2017. Currently, the project is operational both as pilot mode and scale up mode in the states of Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh. Some of the achievements from the pilot states include:

- Capacity Building of local cadre who can support the project in their own blocks and also be used in scaling of the project in other blocks
- A robust institutional structure for enabling convergence and participatory governance at the GP level
- Poverty reduction plan prepared by CBO and its acceptance by various stakeholders
- Community Based Organisations emerging as a service delivery agency
- Nurturing innovative action by local communities

The special feature which upholds the project is contextualising activities based on the field realities. However the major project activities which are implemented in the field remain more or less the same. Formation

and capability building of the local cadre is the first step in this regard. This cadre is called Local Resource Group (LRG). The SHG network is then targeted through the LRG cadre and a series of participatory assessment and planning activities are carried out in the field. Participatory Assessment of Entitlement (PAE), Entitlement Access Plan (EAP), Entitlement Tracking Register (ETR), Gram Panchayat Poverty Reduction Plan (GP2RP) are all part of the participatory tools we use for the empowerment of the SHG network. Local Self Government Institutions are also a part of the project activities and hence their capacity building also happens throughout the project activities. There are institution building activities which takes place as a part of the project activities.

In places where SHG federation is absent at the Gram Panchayat level, Village Organisation Coordination Committee (VOCC) are formed as an informal federation of Village Organisations (VO). These committees help to initiate and coordinate the social development activities in the Panchayat level and further strengthen the SHG network. Gram Panchayat Coordination Committees (GPCC) are formed as an institutional platform of convergence for the local self government institutions and SHG federations. As a result of these various activities, the SHG network develop an organic relationship with the local self government institutions which further promote joint initiatives towards local development.



Our Reach

Sl.No.	States	No.of Districts	No of Blocks	No of Gram Panchayats/ VDC/ VC	No of Local Resource Persons (LRG Members)	Internal Mentors
1	Assam	11	25	168	515	33
2	Karnataka	4	4	40	281	100
3	Jharkhand	12	42	550	717	124
4	Odisha	4	4	12	108	25
5	Maharashtra	3	3	58	209	80
6	Rajasthan	3	4	67	342	100
7	Tripura	3	12	295	1404	100
8	Chhattisgarh	5	5	87	137	20
9	Manipur	2	2	50	165	-
10	Uttar Pradesh	10	10	100	244	-
11	Mizoram	1	2	37	83	-
Total		50	94	1384	2611	588

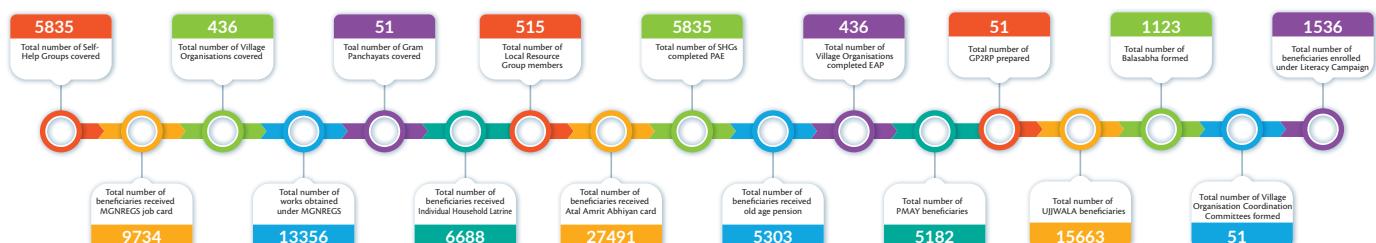
*table shows the reach of the project in all the partner states, including the states where the MoU is expired. The states of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram includes the pilot and scale up details.

Updates from the States

Assam



Assam, situated in the northeastern part of India is renowned for its rich culture and heritage. The formal engagements of Kudumbashree NRO and Assam SRLM has started off with the MoU signed for piloting PRI-CBO Convergence project in two blocks of Nagaon and Morigaon. Subsequently the project flourished from its pilot phase and have scaled up to four blocks during the period 2016 to 2018. The major activities carried out in the field include developing local cadre, strengthening the CBO network, participatory planning exercises and formation of institutional platforms for convergence. There are various social development initiatives which were carried out under the leadership of SHG network as a result of these project activities. Formation of Balasabha groups, kitchen garden initiatives, organisation of various programmes such as school enrolment of drop out kids, health camps, eye check up camps and literacy campaign etc. are such initiatives which emerged as good practices as a result of the Convergence project. The second scale up endeavour facilitates the project expansion to nineteen more blocks and the project is currently being initiated in these blocks.



Tripura



Tripura, one of the north-eastern states of India, is the third smallest state in the country. The partnership of Kudumbashree NRO and Tripura SRLM initiated with the signing of MoU for PRI-CBO Convergence project on 15th December 2016. The pilot project was implemented in Matabari and Killa blocks and the same was scaled up to all the Gram Panchayats of Matabari block by May 2017. During this phase, a total of 842 SHGs were covered from 50 GP/VCs of Matabari and Killa. Overcoming all the hurdles, including the multiple tribal languages prevalent in the project areas, key project activities were carried out by

the selected Local Resource Group members. Along with the key project activities, a lot of innovative activities were also undertaken under the Convergence project. Formation and activation of mothers committee, conducting legal awareness campaigns, preparation of Vulnerability Reduction Plan and conducting health camps, formation of Balasabha etc. are among the few important initiatives taken up under the project. Currently the project is scaled up to 12 blocks and 295 GP/VCs.

Manipur



Manipur, the northeastern state of India is located in the easternmost part of the country. According to the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act 1994, the state can be divided into two distinct parts- the hill areas and the valley areas. The hill area is governed by the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971 whereas the valley area comes under the provisions of Panchayati Raj Act. Kudumbashree NRO partnered with Manipur SRLM for implementing the PRI-CBO Convergence project from February 2018.. The project is being implemented in 713 SHGs of 66 GP/VAs across the two pilot blocks. The unique innovative activity which was undertaken in Manipur is the livelihood mapping exercise conducted as an entry activity of the Convergence project. Though this exercise, a variety of livelihood support from



Mushroom farming, Manipur



Collective vegetable cultivation, Manipur

various departments were identified and beneficiary list based on their demands was created. Mushroom farming, collective vegetable cultivation of SHGs were all a part of this exercise. The project is going to be scaled up to one more block in Imphal east district.

Mizoram



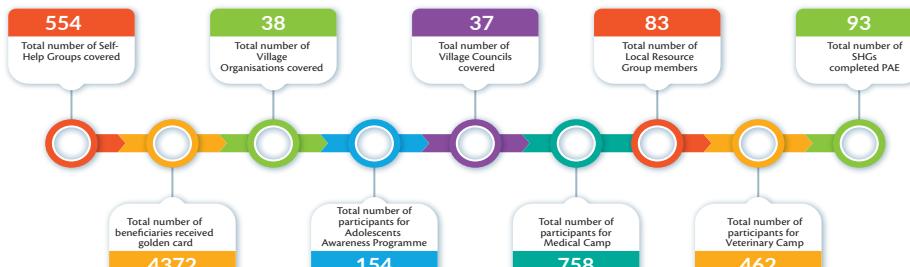
Mizoram is a state situated in the north eastern part of India and has only eight administrative districts. There are 26 blocks in the state. The local development of villages is carried out by the Village Councils (VC) in Mizoram. The engagement with Mizoram SRLM and Kudumbashree NRO started with the MoU signed for the PRI-CBO Convergence Project. The project was rolled out in October 2018 on a pilot basis in Serchhip district. It is being implemented in two blocks namely Serchhip and East Lungdar of Serchhip district. Currently 554 SHGs are covered under the project. The major activities carried out in the state include capacity building of the local resource group and SHG network, orientation of various line departments, conducting golden card camp, health camps and conducting PAE. Balasabhas are also formed in the state establishing connections with the already existing model created by YMA of Mizoram.



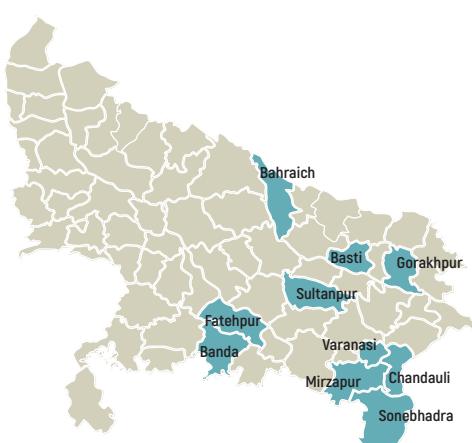
Golden Card Camp at Serchhip, Mizoram



Exposure visit of LRGs at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Serchhip



Uttar Pradesh

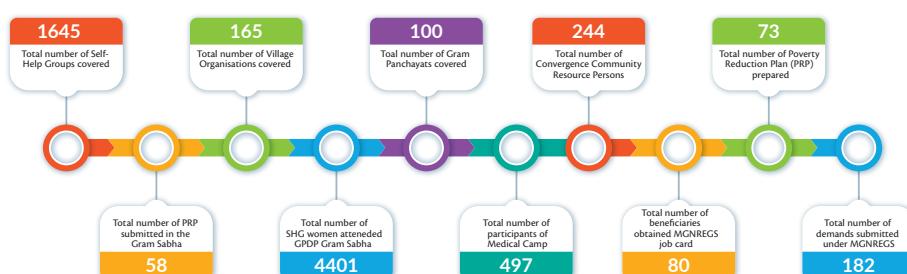


Uttar Pradesh located in the northern part of India is the most populous state of the country. The formal engagement with Kudumbashree NRO and UPSRLM has started with the signing of MoU for implementing the PRI-CBO Convergence project by September 2018. The project is being implemented in covering 100 GPs from 10 districts. The major activities carried out in the field include orientation of the PRI members and line departments and SHG network, preparation of Poverty Reduction Plans (PRP), mobilisation of SHG network for GPDP Gram Sabha, selection and capacity building of Convergence Community Resource Persons (CCRPs) and conduct of PAE and EAP in SHG

network. The State team has also initiated a few innovative activities such as conducting medical camps, weekly local market, literacy campaigns, departmental convergence for identifying avenues for livelihood generation.



Medical camp organised in Arajiline, Varanasi



Contextualising Convergence

Livelihood Mapping (Manipur)

While the basic outline and activities of the project remain the same in each state, the approach adopted often differs. This depends on the community we work with, and their demands. And our project in Manipur is a testament to that. While a typical PRI-CBO convergence project would begin their work on the field through PAE, the project in Manipur dipped their toe in the water through livelihood mapping.

Why Livelihood Mapping?

From initial conversations with the community, our team realized that there was a great demand for livelihood opportunities, particularly in the Hill areas. Added to this was the inability of panchayat/ village bodies to provide to people 100 days of work in a year under MGNREGA, irregular payment and the consequent lack of interest in the scheme by the community; hence, the decision to work on livelihood mapping as one of our entry level activities in Manipur.

To begin with, we focused on implementing the mapping exercise in our pilot blocks Keirao – Bitra and Machi in 12 panchayats and 31 villages respectively. In order to diversify livelihood opportunities, we would need to take stock of what already exists on the field.

Key features:

The exercise focused on assessing the current status of livelihood opportunities available to the community, identifying existing gaps and addressing the same. Key features of the exercise included: a) an analysis of household assets, current livelihood practices and future livelihood goals at the micro level (village level) b) it emphasizes on and fosters participation of the SHG groups. This is important in order for us to focus on the needs and priorities as identified by the affected population themselves. The assessments used participatory methods such as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) at SHG & VLF level to identify problems and priorities of the community. The concerned block teams, elected representatives of each panchayat, and VLFs were involved in each step of the activity.

Process Adopted:

We started by working with the state team and the block teams of Keirao-Bitra and Machi to come up with a suitable module for the implementation of the activity. Livelihood activities were divided into three categories: farm, off-farm and entrepreneurship. Each team was able to provide insight into the livelihood activities carried out in their respective blocks, under each category. We then held meetings with the elected representatives of each panchayat to brief them about the objective of activity, its potential benefits towards the development of the village, and the support we



Glimpses of Livelihood Mapping, Manipur

required from them. The next step was to brief the VLFs on the activity. The plan for implementing the mapping exercise was made by consulting VLF members. Dates and venues were assigned to each SHG, and it was the responsibility of each LRG to facilitate the activity with each SHG. During these meetings, it was necessary to emphasize that the activity in no way came with the promise of loans and other financial benefits for the SHGs. The activity was carried out with each SHG, with the participation of the Mentors, LRGs, Active Women and the Cluster Coordinator. Panchayat members also helped during the team collecting and translating data while the exercise was being conducted.

The data that was collected at the SHG level, was consolidated at the VLF level, and the final document was authorized by the VLF, with the signature of the executive members and by sealing it with a stamp, thus indicating their ownership of this data. A copy of the document was then handed over to the concerned panchayat members.

It was encouraging to see that, at each step of the mapping exercise, the respective block teams, LRGs and mentors worked together, and more than that, the PRI and VA bodies showed enthusiasm in carrying out the activity and participating in it.

Findings:

The data collected from the activity showed that communities in the plain areas are largely engaged in paddy cultivation in addition to growing vegetables, whereas in the hill areas, jhum

cultivation is widely practiced. In both hill and plain areas, people were involved in piggy and poultry farming; however this is largely done for their consumption. The mapping showed potential for developing the technical know-how and entrepreneurship skills that would be necessary to scale up these activities, in order to earn due benefits from them.

It also brought to notice the fact that there needed to be a special focus on creating a forward and backward linkage value chain.

Outcomes:

The consolidated data has been shared with MSRLM/ the District Authority. MSRLM has appointed a cadre dedicated to fostering livelihood activities. They were given training during the 2nd week of July at the block level. This cadre will soon begin imparting training to the SHG members. In 2018, we also collaborated with KVK, in Keirao – Bitra. They helped us in conducting a village level training on mushroom cultivation. MSRLM is also looking to carry out the activity among newly formed SHGs in other resource blocks of the state.

With a clear idea of the assets currently available to each of them and the livelihood opportunities they can take up, this activity should help women of SHG federations create effective Micro Credit Plans that benefits all members as they see fit. Moreover, this exercise hopefully helps them think about their SHGs as more than just a platform for thrift and credit activities.

Women empowerment through literacy

(Barhampur block, Nagaon District, Assam)

Barhampur development block falls under Nagaon district with 965 SHGs.

Empowerment of women in various sectors and areas is one major factor that aids development and literacy is one of the major factor that contributes towards achieving women empowerment.

The NRO team working on the PRI-CBO Convergence project in Assam, conceived and implemented the idea of an adult literacy campaign to impart basic literacy skills among the members of SHGs. The campaign would focus on teaching the women how to write their own names, the name of their SHG, and VO, the name of their respective panchayat and their signature. However, the campaign would not just be restricted to the basics, but would also aim to look into 'literacy' as legal literacy, literacy about rights and entitlements and financial literacy. The complete 'literacy programme' will be carried out as a part of SHG activity.

The initial phase of the campaign was implemented in eleven panchayats in Barhampur block. It kicked off with classes that taught the women of SHGs to read and write basic details about themselves. On completing these classes, these women would be notified as a "complete literate women collective". A total of 947 women from 11 panchayats participated and were successfully notified as "completely literate women collectives".

Conceptualisation of the programme :

Participatory assessment of entitlements: PAE is one of the basic activities under the PRI-CBO convergence project, where SHG level interactive discussions take place on their rights and entitlements and baseline data is collected by the women themselves.

It was during PAE, it came to notice that women were unable to write their name, or to put a signature by themselves. This realization brought to the question, their ability to maintain and monitor records of their SHGs in a fair manner. That is when the mentor of Barhampur block discussed the idea of adult literacy programme with the internal mentor cadre and block mission staff.

Approach: This wasn't something we noticed in just one panchayat, in fact this seemed to be the prevailing condition in all panchayats in Barhampur, hence the decision to make this programme a mass campaign with Barhampur Block as the unit was taken. The implementation of the campaign followed the following procedure.

- Survey among SHGs:** A survey was conducted by the Local Resource Group members in their respective VO's to identify and prepare a list of SHG women who are illiterate. The data received was shared with the internal mentors and the mentor.

- Planning with Internal mentors for implementation:** A meeting was conducted with mentor resource person and internal mentors to plan the roll-out of the program. The team decided to conduct classes in each village with timing that was convenient for the women. Some villages decided to have a class once/ twice in a week, while as some villages decided to learn one hour everyday. The local resource group also identified the possible venues where these classes could be conducted. Some panchayats offered their panchayat bhavans while in other places, the education department and/or the social welfare department allowed for classes to be held in schools and anganwadis.

- Identification of the teachers:** Bal sabha children who are studying in 8th standard and above, LRG's, volunteers from their respective villages such as college students, teachers, retired teachers, other educated people were identified in each panchayat by the LRGs and internal mentors. The student - teacher ratio was different in different villages, but the program managed to get one teacher per 5-8 students.

Duration: This was a short-term intensive programme focused on imparting basic literacy skills to the women of SHG. The surveys were taken in November 2017 and the classes started by December 2017 in the first panchayat. There was a formal inauguration programme in all panchayats. Classes in all panchayats came to an end by March 2018.

Beneficiaries of the programme: The beneficiaries of the program were women of SHG federations. A total of 947 women were notified as literate by the end of the program. There were a total of 158 teachers who were involved in making this a success.

Notification programme: After completing the classes, each VO had a small function for notifying the VO as literate. The panchayats also conducted a function to notify the panchayat as a complete literate panchayat. At the conclusion of phase 1 of the campaign a notification programme was organised at Block level where 522 beneficiaries came together and notified themselves as literate in the presence of Block Development Officer of Barhampur, Block Project Manager and other Barhampur Block Mission Management Unit's staff on 21st March 2018.

Planning ahead

Phase 2 of the adult literacy programme will look into holding classes for women who are not a part of NRLM's SHG federations. Legal literacy classes, classes on their rights and entitlements, financial literacy classes have already started in different SHGs and VO's as part of the project, because literacy is not just about reading and writing for the women but it should also include all legal and financial awareness about their own rights and responsibilities.



Notification Program, Barhampur Block, Nagaon District, Assam

Responses from the field :

"As VOCC coordinator, I felt this was one of the biggest achievements of the PRI-CBO Convergence project . This activity clearly showed the impact of the project. Not just the women of SHG, but all the people in the panchayat came together to support this project some as volunteers and others exhibited support" -Rumena Begum , VOCC coordinator, Bamuni GP.

"LRG told me about this adult literacy programme and I was interested in teaching women. I know how important literacy is. Somehow, I was privileged to go to school and college and I was glad that I could use my knowledge to help others. I believe that knowledge increases when shared. So I decided to teach the poem and this is one of the best things that I have done in my life till now" -Rejina Terangpi , College Student , Volunteer of adult literacy programme , Borbari GP.

"I am above 58 years of age and now I can write my name and sign with pen on paper , instead of giving a thumb impression. This is the first time someone is taking an initiative to teach me how to write my own name. Now I know how to write my name, SHG name, VO's name and Panchayats name. I never went to school, because of the problems in my family and I was married when I was 14 years of age. LRGs are working hard in all the ways to help us. I cant express my gratitude in words. And this somehow gave me the courage to speak to people too." - Jalaka Khatun, Beneficiary of adult literacy campaign , Balijuri GP

"Women have the capacity within them to learn everything, the problem is that they are not getting enough opportunities. This adult literacy programme showed the impact of this project and women came together to study and the community was also supportive" - Hoshnara Begum ,Internal Mentor , Chapanala GP

Case Studies

The tuition center (Manipur)

Leishembi VLF in Chanam Sandrok panchayat started a tuition center to provide free tuitions for students of SHG members who cannot afford to pay the fees of private tuition centers. They started with 40 students, and 2 teachers to support them. The center ran for 5 months with financial support from the VLF. However, they were unable to support the growing number of students and the teachers required to support them and had to shut down.

Undeterred by this setback, the VLF with help from the LRGs of Chanam Sandrok attempted to coordinate with different groups, and other members of the VLF to continue the tuition classes. After two months of planning and coordinating with the Youth Club, their panchayat members and members of their VLF, the tuition center reopened on April 8th. The Youth Club and the Panchayat hired



From "Save the Environment" drawing competition

two graduates, and a private school teacher respectively; each is being paid Rs.4000 per month

SHG members in Chanam Sandrok are all engaged in weaving. Their products are sold in the market, through a middle person. Here, the VLF acts as the middle person and collects one product from each SHG to be supplied to the market. The profits from these sales are used by the VLF to fund the tuition center, thereby solving their funding problem.

The center now caters to 80 students from class



World Environment day celebration at the tuition centre, Manipur

1 to class5 – from both private and public schools- with 5 teachers to support them. These classes run from 5:30 am to 7:30 am. In addition to subject like English, Science and Maths, the center also provides stationery to those who cannot afford it. On World Environment Day, the Youth Club, along with the VLF, had conducted a class wise drawing competition, on the theme "Save the Environment" along with an awareness session on the environment, and how are actions have been endangering it.

Golden Card-A Health Benefit Under Aayushmaan Bharat (Mizoram)

Introduction

Aayushmaan Bharat is a health insurance scheme launched by Government of India in 2018. The main idea of this scheme is to provide health insurance upto Rs. 5,00,000 across all the sections of people in the country. The scheme also provides coverage of all diseases/treatment in Government and Private Hospitals in the country.

conduct a camp to reach those families who had no access to the CSCs.

First, they met with the owner of the CSC center, who gladly agreed to the idea. Thereafter, they met with the Village Council President and with the VO leaders who extended their full support towards organising the camp.

Outcome

The camp was organized on March 22nd 2019 and a total of 250 families were enrolled under the health insurance scheme. With the success of the camp in Khawlailung, the women of the SHG network along with the NRO team is planning to conduct such camps in other villages in Serchhip district. These camps will be carried out in coordination with the block teams, the concerned VO leaders, and the respective elected representatives.



Golden Card Camp in Khawlailung Village

Khawlailung is a village situated under the jurisdiction of East Lungdar Block. The village has around 500 families and is also one of the largest in terms of population size in the block. In Mizoram, it is the responsibility of the "Common Service Centres" (CSC) to provide the Golden card to the beneficiaries in the rural areas. But, due to lack of resources the CSCs are not in a position to reach out to all the families in the village. To tackle this problem, the Mentor along with the LRGs decided to

Only the will matters! (Tripura)

An SHG was finally formed in a Village Council area in Satchand block, South Tripura district after a struggle of three long years and tens of visits to the village community. This was possible with the combined effort of the mentors and imentors deployed in the block, the TRLM cluster coordinator and the Panchayat Secretary.

Harpatali is a village council (Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council Panchayat) consisting of Tripuri tribe in Satchand block of South Tripura district. It is located on the border of Bangladesh far away from the main road in an extremely remote area. One needs to take a 'kutcha' muddy road to reach to the village area through a thick forest and during monsoon, it is almost impossible to reach there. Absence of any passenger vehicle to the village makes it a much more difficult commute.

The community is very suspicious of outsiders coming in to their village and tends to display caution while interacting with people who visit the village. Additionally, this community is infamous for having a lot of drinkers and thus, is not considered a safe place for women to be out in the evening.

The block staff i.e. a cluster coordinator of TRLM named Bikram in this case has continuously attempted to form new SHGs in Harpatali but has had very little luck doing so. With every visit, he faced suspicion and hostility from the community as well as the panchayat members. Problems were many- no suitable household for ICRP rounds for forming groups, and not a single positive response from the panchayat and the community, all in addition highly sensitive area when it comes to outsiders being in the village owing to a number of murder cases that were reported. This thing made it very difficult for the different BDOs to visit the village as well. No BDO had ever visited the village for a number of reasons. Though there was a special focus from the BMMU on this particular panchayat in order to form groups, nothing seemed to be working. In between all of this trying and missing, three years passed.

The PRI- CBO Convergence project started in Satchand block in September 2018. One Mentor, Bindu Sanoj, along with 14 Internal Mentors looks after the project in the block. In the initial days of their work, they were advised not to work in Harpatali village, owing to a lack of SHGs.

As they developed a better understanding of the block, and its remaining panchayats they felt a little more confident at the prospect of working in Harpatali. They took the initiative to visit the panchayat when the Secretary of the panchayat having attended the project

orientation held for PRI members, found himself impressed with the project.

A date and time were fixed for the IMentors, the Mentor and Bikram, to visit the panchayat. With the help of the secretary a few women were mobilised to meet and interact with the outsiders once more.

There was a new strategy that was followed this time. Since all the IMentors deployed in Satchand are women, all of them were asked to come to Harpatali with the Mentor and Bikram. Once they reached Harpatali, the mentors and I mentors went door to door to convince a few more women into attending the gathering. This plan worked as the women who had gathered for the meeting seemed impressed and at ease with the presence of the mentor and IMentors present at the gathering. This was not like the other gatherings they had been made to attend, headed by the CC and other members of the block team.

However, it wasn't a very easy meeting to conduct, this time around either. One of the drunk men around tried to come near to the Mentor in order to touch her. A few other drunk men were also spotted within a distance.

At the gathering, the women were told about the importance of forming an SHG, and the economic and social benefits they stood to gain out of it. The Internal Mentors present there contributed to this with the stories of their own SHGs. One Internal Mentor even happened to have a similar story to that of Harpatali, to share



Gathering in Harpatali, Satchand Block, Tripura

with the women. The mentor also shared her experience of being a part of the Kudumbashree network in Kerala, and the experience she has had, working with SHGs in our partner states. Listening to their experiences softened the women to forming an SHG group of their own. As the women opened up to the idea of setting up their own SHG, the smile on Bikram's face grew. His struggle of the past three years had finally come to fruition.

Interestingly, on the very first day, a group was created. The name chosen by the women was 'Salka' meaning 'the Sun is coming out'. Literally, this day had seen the Sun coming out in Harpatali for the first time in three years, after a long battle. A total of 13 women had joined the group.

Two other groups were formed within the next week. A few more groups will be formed in Harpatali and a special focus will be there from the Mentor and Internal Mentors on this particular panchayat.

Tickle bone for thought

Househunting Scenes in Assam

Akanksha Mishra



Diana Ann Joseph & Elizabeth Soby



Benazir Nazeem Nawas



Personal Stories

Filming the Field (Film Making Workshop, Trivandrum)

The places where the convergence project runs have their own different tales to narrate. Starting from the stories of the women we work with, challenges we face, trainings that happen, the progress of the project, the learnings from different states and other such repositories of lived experiences that tell the story of the convergence project and what goes into making it happen on the field. All of this if captured well can be used as a resourceful archive to be used as a cross-learning tool as well as a record of the trajectory that the project follows. Keeping this in mind, Kudumbashree-NRO decided to organise a 5-day movie making workshop from 30th April 2019 to 4th May 2019 to learn film making using mobile phones, for all the field coordinators . It was conducted by Ms Vidhu Vincent, Director of award-winning Malayalam movie- Manhole, Appu N Bhattathiri, film editor, five times Kerala State film awards winner and Tobin, Cameraman. This workshop included learning basic cinematography, script writing and film editing.

This workshop was the first of its kind that I attended. Growing up watching all sorts of movies, I had a curiosity towards how they are made and the process which results into the masterpieces on silver-screen. Although I've had the opportunity to see shooting and read about it to know how extensive it is, experiencing it first-hand was a different feeling altogether. Since the workshop focused on how short movies or documentaries can be made using mobile cameras, which is a challenging equipment to deal with as far as camera-work is concerned because of its own limitations, we had to struggle with bringing our ambitious storylines, high aesthetic standards, half-baked skills and inadequate apparatus together. But thanks to our instructors Vidhu, Tobin, Appu and Shamal that they patiently bore with our million questions, took the pain of assisting us and introduced us to the intricate technicalities of camera work and editing.

The workshop started with watching documentaries and short films that are shot



Film Making Workshop - Mariya Rani Center, Trivandrum.

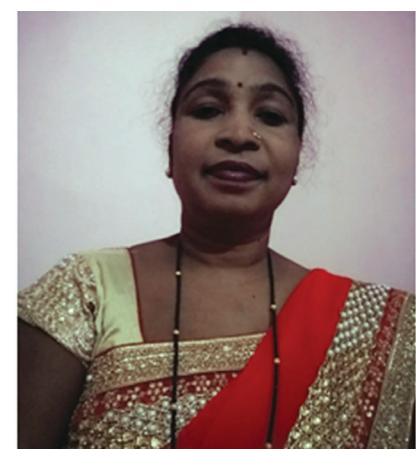
using mobile cameras to set in motion the possibilities of things we could do with the equipment available to us on the field. We moved on to understanding how to capture videos and images where we had different lengths and angles of shots explained, deluge of editing techniques elucidated and supplemented with examples and hands on support. It made us realise that what apparently looks flawless on screen, comes from the hard work of so many different people as fragments and then gets woven into a scene. Then we dived into exploring the technicalities of taking a good shot including the placement of the camera and that of the subject on the screen, adjusting the source of light and different shots that can be taken to capture the essence of the scene. The session on script-writing began with understanding how to outline the goals that go behind writing a well articulated script at the very outset. These included, a) why we would want to tell this story? b) what is the angle/ point of view (is it a first/second/third person narrative) c) defining the target audience and what should be their take-away from the film d) explaining the core story and how all the themes in the movie will add up to it and e) the story you would like to tell.

They say that "practice makes perfect", and sure, not a lot of movie-making skills can be practiced

within the span of a 5 day workshop, but, once our instructors covered the basics with us, we were given the opportunity to put to use our new found skill set and make our own short movies. A total of 6 short movies were made, within the span of two days - all of them shot in the premises of the venue for the workshop, with props that were readily available to us at that moment. Through these short movies, each one of us got the chance to try our hand at various aspects of filmmaking- i.e the script writing, direction, videography, editing, and of course acting.

The Things which appear apparently inconsequential, such as sound, can completely change the mood of a particular setting. This workshop also revealed that there were so many superb actors, exceptional story-tellers and expeditious editors amongst us, worthy of acclamation. There are so many aspects of movie-making, which is arguably one of the best ways of documentation and communication, that cannot be learnt in a workshop. Those are left for us to pursue through our lenses and we might just find a lot of stories to be told from the fields.

(Rahul Pati : former State Project Coordinator, Tripura)



Because she refused... (Mentor's story)

I first met Dhaneswari Didi in Varanasi. It had been three months since we started working in UP, and field work was proving to be more difficult than anticipated. She was one among the five women who came from Chhattisgarh to help us with the project in UP. With the increasing pressure of the project, I was only focused on one thing: find the better performing women so that I could get her to work with me. As the project progressed, the requirement

for manpower on the field also changed. And so, after a five-month stint in Gorakhpur, she shifted to Chandauli and was officially a part of my team. At a brief glance, didi comes across as someone who is soft spoken and mellow, and for the most part she is. However, with the women on the field, she comes to life, working with them with utmost patience, to explain our formats, and various schemes to them over and over again. Within a month of being in Chandauli she has managed to establish excellent rapport with both

the community, and the officials we work with. Now, most of our conversations usually revolve around work, but every now and then, while in conversation with either the didis, or with me, she slips in little anecdotes about her life in Chhattisgarh. These are usually stories about how she is currently helping her brother set up a taxi service, or how she worked as mate and MGNREGA and learnt the technicalities of the scheme, or just general funny stories, about women chit chatting about "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" while washing clothes. It was only a couple of days ago, that we talked about family, and the life she lived before she came to UP.

She grew up in Gariaband, in a family of 6. The second child of 4 siblings, she says she was brought up with immense love and pampering, from her family. She spent her days as young girl, roaming around the village, with her friends, occasionally heading out to the district to watch movies and make merry with her friends. Neither was she scared about loitering around and travelling long distances, nor did her parents think it was necessary to put those restrictions on her movements. Though she had a slight interest in music, she says that back then, kids her age were never told to aspire to anything " It is only now that we tell our children to dream big, no one ever said that to me when I was their age".

Like most girls her age, she stopped going to school after Class 8 (even though she passed with very good marks, she noted in between), with the school being 15km away from her

home. Soon after she trained as an ASHA worker, and worked in a hospital until the age of 21. In 2007 she got married to a police officer. She says that she got married on 11 June 2012, and by 21 June, he started getting drunk, and subjecting her to violence. And it was only then, that she found out that, he had been married before, and his wife and child had left him because the abuse was getting intolerable. And it was not just violence at the hands of her husband, her mother in law would often beat her as well, because she was "too dark". Midway through her first pregnancy, her sister came to stay with her, and that was when her situation became apparent to her family, and she left her husband to go back home. During the three years of her marriage, she was made to spend countless nights locked outside the house, given little to no medical attention during her pregnancy, and made to suffer a miscarriage. In 2010, she decided that she had had enough, and decided to leave her husband.

She went back home, to her family, and started working with an NGO, to support her family. In 2013, NRLM started making SHGs in her village, despite opposition from her family, and people suggesting that she look for a second marriage, she held her ground, and started her work with the SHG federation. She started working as a bookkeeper, and then progressed to working as "Active Women", to MCP master trainer, and then as CCC under the PRI-CBO convergence project. She says that, through her work as bookkeeper, and VO assistant, she rediscovered her love for maths. With encouragement from her family and the BPMs she worked with, she wrote her

10th standard and 12th standard exams, and passed both with flying colors. With the loans and funds she received from the SHG, she managed to construct a house for her family, 2 scooters that allowed her to travel for work without restrictions, and 4-wheeler to take her daughter (who suffers from sickle cell anaemia) to the hospital without any hindrances, arrange her brother's wedding, and very recently, purchase a vehicle for brother, to provide him a source of income. While all of this sounds like, her life was smooth sailing after leaving her husband, she often faced trouble from nay-sayers in her society, who had trouble with the fact that she travelled consistently for her work, and thought it ok to convince her brother of the same.

However, she says that, all of that has changed now. People in her village now acknowledge that she has come a long way, and that she has become the "Hero" for not just her family, but also the entire village.

She works in UP now, to support her family, and to give her children an education, and help them achieve their dreams. She fights everyday to ensure that her children will not have to face the same violence that she did, at the hands of her husband.

"Ab mere gaon ke log mujhe besahara nahi bulate. Ab vo mujhe dusron ka sahara banta dekhte hain" (Now the people in my village don't look at me as someone without support. They look at me giving support to others instead)

(Krishna Hemaraj : Field Coordinator, Uttar Pradesh)

Tickle bone for thought

Ethics of an auto ride in UP

Taking a shared auto ride in UP is an intense and competitive activity for all those involved in it. It may seem like a lawless playground, but, one too many auto rides, and you start figuring them out. Here's what I've got so far ; No matter how irritating your driver is, you show him your utmost loyalty. He may take eons to start up the auto, and squeeze in a million people before setting off; there may be other empty autos passing by and you may be running extremely late for your meeting, but you sit patiently and wait for your ride to start up.

Everyone and their children, and their big bags get a seat, but you don't usually see women sitting upfront with the driver. The front seat of an auto is the unofficial boys club. It would be uncouth for a woman to be sitting up close with the driver, her legs swinging out, and her saree fluttering in the wind. Dear men, if you see a woman passenger waiting for a ride, you give up your seat for her and take your rightful place next to the driver.

My problems with the auto rides usually arise with the number of people squeezed into an auto. The middle seat, seats 4 butts, and seat 4 butts it will, irrespective of the size of the said butts. More problems arise with the "accidental" groping or the unnecessary hand on your knee, and arm around your shoulder. But all of that gets a free pass because, NO SPACE! WHERE ELSE WOULD THEY KEEP THEIR



HANDS? GOD! WOMEN ARE SO SENSITIVE!

As you get off, your driver may give you an inflated fare for the ride. If he does, argue with him, because he is lying to you about the extra 10 bucks he's taking for petrol.

Above all, no ride is complete without background music. Even the bumpiest ride becomes a party with the right Bhojpuri tunes!

Stories Untold

Main sirf padna chahti hun... (I just want to study)

Name: Preeti Kumari

Age: 19 years

Village: Puraina Amritpur, Mihinpura block, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh

When I was little, my father used to work in the city and send money to us in the village where I used to live with my mother and an elder sister. My mother says we had enough money then and we had a better standard of living. My mother gave birth to another daughter when I was 12 and my father's brothers started torturing my mother for not having a male child. My father decided to leave his job and move back to our village to take care of us. Finally after 14 years of trying, my mother bore a son. Now we were 6 people in the family and my father had to work the fields to get us by. Gradually our situation started deteriorating, my mother explains because of increase in expenditure with us growing up and joining schools. I think my father's family also had a role to play. I remember this one time my father and his younger brother were fighting. I was 13, and when they got up to probably hit each other I tried to intervene. My father beat me black and blue. Later he tried justifying his actions and explained to me that girls are not supposed to interfere in the matters of men and I should keep that in mind to stay safe in the future.

I used to love going to school. Even with two younger siblings to take care of, whenever my mother asked me to skip school to help her with household chores, I used to wake up at 4am to try and finish everything only so that I could convince her to let me go. My elder sister understood my interests and offered help wherever she could so that I did not have to skip classes. She hardly went to school. I have

never skipped a single class except for this one time I fell ill and I couldn't attend school for a week. I was the topper in my class. In 5th grade, I decided to continue with mathematics even though all the other girls ended up bunking the class. I used to score the maximum and I guess the boys in the class were jealous of that. They would always tease me and tell me that mathematics is not a subject for girls and I was being a disgrace to my lot by trying to do things differently. One day the teasing got too much to bear and I came home crying. My father came to school with me the next day to speak to my teacher about the episode. The teacher convinced my father that till the time I continue studying mathematics this torture would continue and also that as a girl I had no use of mathematics in the future. My father made asked me to stop attending the class, and I miss studying numbers till date. I was really good at it.

When it was time for me to join college, I remember a lot of people coming to my house and telling my father that there was no need to spend on my education any further and that they should now start saving up for my marriage and looking for a suitable match. I was only 16 then. "Dehaat mein ladki ki zindagi ka maksad yahi Hota hai, thoda sa pad lo taaki ladke waale shaadi ke liye thode kam paise mein maan jaye. Yahan hamari padayi kabhi bhi hamein hamari zindagi banane ke liye ya aage badne ke liye nahi hoti. Ladkiyaan aur ladke alag hote hain nah" (in villages, this is how it is. Girls are supposed to get bare minimum education so that the boy's family agrees to take her without asking for too much money. Education for girls in villages is never to let them have their own dreams or make a life for themselves. Girls and boys are different). I had to fight with my parents for one week to convince them to let me go to a

college and continue studying. I really wanted to go to the college that was slightly far away from where we live because the college near our village did not offer the courses I wanted to study and I knew the conditions of the college were not meant for someone like me. But going away and studying was out of the question. I also wanted to go to the city like my father and earn a handsome living, but girls do not get to fulfil all their dreams and I have accepted that. I was happy that they agreed to let me continue studying and that was enough. I am pursuing Bachelors in Physical Education now, I do not like the course, but at least I get to attend college and I will have a degree once I am done. This will help in getting some job and having my own money somehow, won't it? I feel the lack of direction and guidance but I know with the enthusiasm I have I can actually do something good with my life and not end up like other girls in our village who get married and have 1-2 kids by the time they are my age. My parents are currently spending around 15000 per annum for my education and they have told me that this money can be put to better use multiple times, but it has never deterred me.

Then NRLM started making SHGs in our village. My mother became a part of an SHG and my father was selected as the book keeper. I helped both of them with calculations and maintaining their books. To my surprise, my mother awestruck with my abilities to do it so well, exclaimed that they should have probably allowed me to continue studying mathematics. It was a big day for me. I love singing and people have told me that I am rather good at it. I do not like doing household chores but as a girl it is my fate to do it, I will have to take care of my husband and my in-laws one day and I cannot escape that. Even though I feel that I am getting only half of what I want, I still dream to become a university professor one day.

(Preeti is the daughter of Convergence Community Resource Person, currently in her 2nd year)

Far away from home!

Name: Reena Kumari (changed as per the request)

Age: 29 years

Place: Mihinpura block, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh

I have 3 sisters and 1 one brother. My parents moved to Bharaih from Gajipur in the 2000. I studied till 8th and then had to leave school because my parents could not bear the expenses. I got married when I was 20. My father thought the boy was educated and the in-laws seemed good, so I will stay happy with my family. But little did we know that this family would take all my happiness.

In the beginning my husband did not even acknowledge my existence. "Wo sirf raat ko aate the apna kaam karte the our chale jaate the. Jab hi main puchti ki kahan ja rahe ho to mujhe bolte ki tumse koi matlab nahi hai chip karke

yahan pedi raho" (he used to come at night, do his business with me and leave. Whenever I used to ask about where he was going, he used to ask me to shut up and stay where I was). After 1 year of our marriage I found a letter that some girl had written to my husband. It was a letter in which she had talked about their love affair and the extent of their relationship. When I tried asking my husband about it, he said that I got married to you because her parents wouldn't agree and now I was supposed to only bear him children and take care of his house. Other than that I had no business poking my nose in his life. I decided to kill myself but then remembered about my parents and the badnaami (bringing bad name) my parents will have to tolerate and accepted this as my fate.

Living with a husband who was treating me like this wasn't the end of my issues. My saas (mother-in-law) made it the purpose of her life

to do everything she could to create a havoc in my life. My in-laws stay in Madhya Pradesh. They visit us very often, without notice. When I was pregnant with my first child my mother-in-law tried to tell my husband that it wasn't his because I go out to work and such women have no character. But after the boy was born, he reminded them of their first son who dies of cancer. My son started falling ill and because my husband never gave me any money I decided to take him to my parents house and get him treated there. I left him there for a month because the doctor said he shouldn't travel. My in-laws went to my parents house pretended like they were worried about the well being of my kid and wanted to get him checked somewhere else. They took the boy with him to Madhya Pradesh and now its been 2 years since I have seen my son. I had a daughter and

another son after that. My saas doesn't show any love towards her other two grandchildren. I understood why she hated my daughter, woh ladki haina (because she is a girl) but when I tried to ask her about her ill-treatment towards my youngest son, she said that he is too dark to be accepted in their family and that she

believed he was an illegitimate child. Last time she came home, she burnt the 3 sarees that I owned because my parents had gifted them to me. They want my parents to continuously send money for the upkeep of their daughter and her kids. I work the fields to send my kids to school and make sure there is enough food in the house

for the 4 of us to eat. My husband only comes to eat. He has no attachment to his children or me. Now I am trying to make use of my padai-likhai (literacy) to run the house.

(Reena Kumari is now working the NRO team as the Convergence Community Resource person)

Capturing Convergence+1

"Little Help"
Langol, Machi, Manipur



Beat The Heat
Jari Panchayat, Banda, Uttar Pradesh



Scenes from the field that keep me motivated and grounded :
Ming Ma Lama

Travelling to the field at 40 degrees, this is what keeps me going :
Subha Kawatra

Assam Skies

When I left Bangalore, I never thought that I would see something as beautiful as the skies of Bangalore anywhere else. And 3 months later, when Assam happened to me, the skies here surprised me!

With our jobs being as difficult and tiring as it is, we tend to find joy in small things to remain motivated. And for me, it has always been the skies of Assam.

When I have been constantly travelling with a backpack over my shoulder across the bumpy and dusty roads of Assam in an overly crowded bus or auto, the sky looks down upon me and gives me the reassurance that everything is temporary. It gives me the reassurance that, just like the clouds that take up random shape every now and then, my troubles will also keep changing their shape!

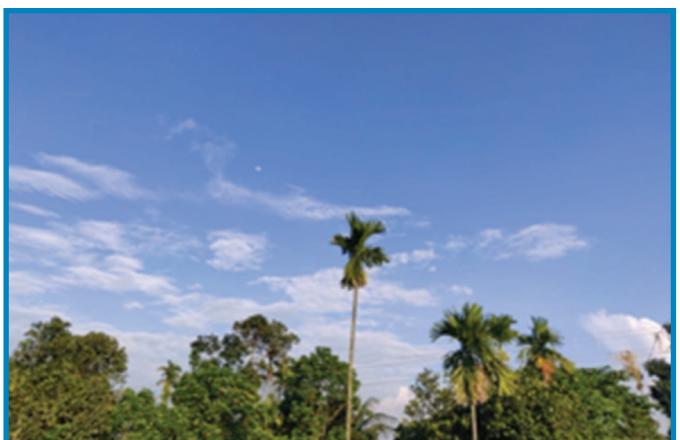
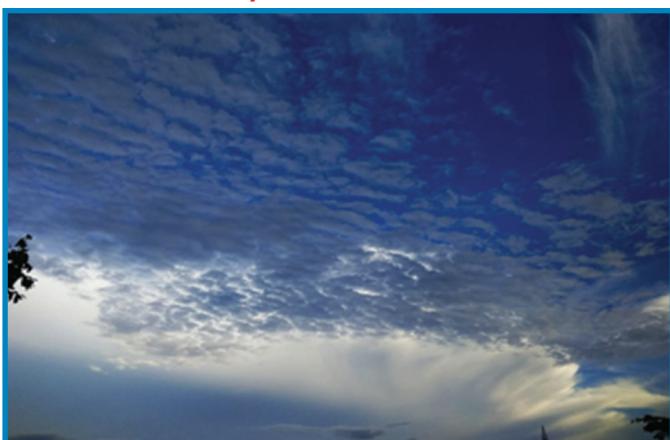
Somehow these days, I am failing to keep up with life's pace. I am glad that, on such days the peaceful blue sky will remain the same and that gives me all the hope I need in life.

To new beginnings and more challenges! - Benazir Nazeem Nawas

Skies of Nagaon



Skies of Sonitpur



Convergence Team



Aajeevika
National Rural Livelihoods Mission
Government of India



Kudumbashree
Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission
Government of Kerala

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