



**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED
NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



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

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Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT.....	4
(i) The project a	

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Background

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

The aim was to help elected members of 50 Gram Panchayats (village councils) in the Rewari District of Haryana State and of 50 in Nainital District of Uttarakhand State, especially women, to fulfill their constitutionally foreseen roles: planning and implementing village

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

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

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

(iii) Conclusions

f Among the many signs of empowerment, evaluators most importantly have witnessed women who have become very articulate, convinced of their mission and clear about their development priorities. Aiming to provide responses to the societal and development needs of their local community, some have started to fulfill new roles as

reviewed available project documentation and information on elected PRI members at Gram

discussions with former local project leaders were held throughout the field visits. Interviews and group meetings were carried out in Panchayats throughout Rewari and Nainital districts.

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

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

India's National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)⁶ aims to ensure the advancement and empowerment of women in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. The 11th Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012) takes this focus

-skill

According to the results of a study carried out across India⁷, 85% of elected women representatives held a village council seat for the first time. The study also claimed that those who have obtained training on roles and responsibilities of PRI members and on rules and regulations of Panchayats performed significantly better. As supporting capacity building measures were unavailable to 43% country-wide, the study recommended regularly

ing multiple dimensions including

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

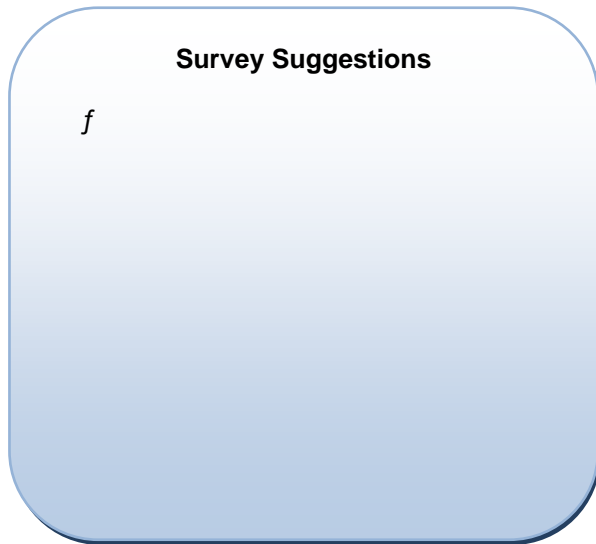
(i) Relevance

Baseline Situation

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

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In addition, the grantee undertook the following efforts to ensure relevance interventions:



During the first year of project implementation HPPI realised the Training of Trainers for its local staff and volunteers in Rewari and Nainital districts with the help of ASTHA, a reputable organisation with a long-standing track record of PRI work in the northern part

training approach, because the NGO considers the relationship between elected PRI members and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as a vehicle for initiating structural change in development at Panchayat level, which

autonomously selected resource persons/organisations, thus satisfying the

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



SHG Groups, the rural communities' social conscience

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

(ii) Effectiveness

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

Pre-election Support

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

Post-election Support

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

The grantee also expanded the project's target group

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

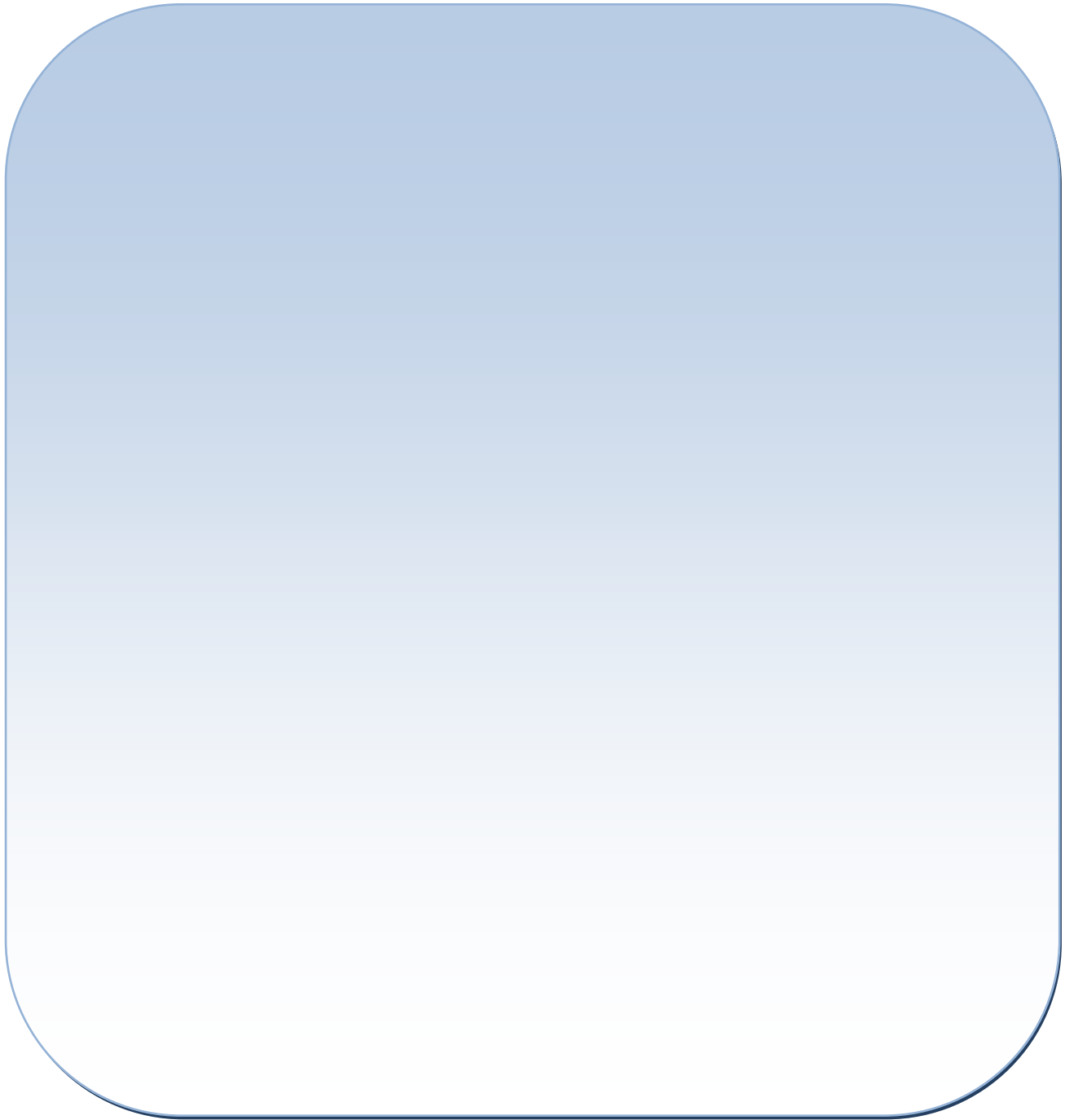
Street plays and awareness materials were designed in ways appropriate to enhance awareness among local community members of what to expect from their elected

budgeted for separately.

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

oversee these projects during their realisation. They travel to meet officials in order to verify

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



Fundamental rights

The development priorities of Garima Chand, chairperson of the Durgapalpur Parma GP and Treasurer of Haldwani's federation that comprises of elected women and SHG members, are focused on issues affecting children and women. As the Panchayat is close to an industrial area called Rudrapur, she is convinced that education in general and vocational training for girls in particular could increase their potential for job opportunities. At present she is not aligned with any political party, but she is willing to affiliate with a party that helps her achieve her long-term objective: the establishment

(v) Sustainability

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Recent federation meeting, Nainital district

Recent federation meeting, Nainital district

(vi) UNDEF Value Added

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

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. Based on our assessment of **relevance**, the grantee's approach to staff capacity building put in place a strong team with the capability to handle issues of gender-related electoral participation and community development in the complex societal contexts resource persons and organisations aut

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

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

UNDEF

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

HPPI

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

Other sources

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

-09, New Delhi

National legislative acts, policies

- f* National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001)
- f* Right to Information Act (2005)
- f* 11th Five Year Plan of the Government of India (2007-2012)

ANNEX 3: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

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

Ms Anne Marie Moeller, Senior Partnership Advisor, HPPI

Ms Karen Thorst, Grant Management and Promotion Team, HPPI

Rewari (19th)

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS

BPL	Below Poverty Line
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRDA	District Rural Development Authorities
GP	Gram Panchayat
HPPI	Humana People to People India
HQ	Headquarter
IEC	Information, education, communication
MDG	