



**Strengthening Local
Self – Governance
in Jharkhand**



Published by

**Partnering Hope into Action
(PHIA) Foundation**

PHIA Foundation is a public charitable trust that works to tackle poverty across India. Its vision is a society free from poverty, exclusion and discrimination and all people living with justice, peace and dignity.



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Disclaimer

This publication was developed by PHIA Foundation under the project funded by Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives titled 'Strengthening Local Self-Governance in selected blocks in Jamtara, Gumla and West Singhbhum districts of Jharkhand'.

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November 2020

Message from Honorary Director

PHIA Foundation



Anand Kumar Bolimera



According to the Article 40 of the Constitution of India, “the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government”. Promoting self-governance at the village level is an important commitment of the state. In 2017, PHIA Foundation along with four civil society partners initiated a joint programme on strengthening local self-governance in Jharkhand. Jharkhand state, home for many Adivasi communities has been known for exhibiting inspiring traditional self-governance models since a long time. The present programme, supported by the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, is an effort to learn and strengthen the governance systems which are integral to a country’s democratic soul.

The journey of the past three years in Jharkhand has been remarkable in deepening democratic values and revitalising various models of self-governance. The programme has been pivotal in empowering local communities, especially among the Adivasi communities, to actively take part in the governance systems, and take decisions that affect their life, resources and ecosystem. This has been achieved by adopting participatory approaches and active engagement with various stakeholders. The programme was successful in reaching remote villages, historically vulnerable, marginalised and socially excluded communities. We are happy to share learnings of our journey and how it has been contributing to help realise the dreams and aspirations of the marginalised communities, and the mandate of the Constitution of India.

Message from Regional Head of Programmes

PHIA Foundation



Johnson Topno



In 2017, PHIA Foundation led an initiative of strengthening local self-governance known as the ‘Gram Swashasan Abhiyan’ across diverse geographies of the state of Jharkhand. A part of the Fifth Schedule of India’s Constitution, these regions are entitled to special provisions and policies in which the Gram Swashasan Abhiyan was grounded. The initiative envisions to strengthen the constitutional values within these regions and communities for self-transformation.

The initiative was modelled on the ‘Gram Sabha Organisational Development’ which is anchored in the local Gram Sabha. Through the Gram Sabha, active participation of the local community was promoted in order to build their ownership over development processes taking place in their area. In doing so, the GSA empowered the Gram Sabhas to establish governance structures and hold service providers accountable on rights and entitlements.

सबसे ऊँची है, ग्राम सभा

अनुसूचित क्षेत्र में ग्राम सभा की शक्तियाँ

24/12/1996 से प्रभावी केंद्रीय कानून में

आम लोगों की परम्परा और हित हिवाज

उनकी सांस्कृतिक पहचान समाजिक

संसाधन और बिचाह निपटाने की

परम्परागत हितियों को

बनाए रखना। और

उनकी संरक्षण।

जो है

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ACRONYMS

AROUSE	Animation Rural Outreach Service
ASRA	Society for Reformation and Advancement of Adivasis
DoPR	Department of Panchayati Raj
FRA	Forest Rights Act
GP	Gram Panchayat
GS	Gram Sabha
GSA	Gram Swashasan Abhiyan
GSOD	Gram Sabha Organisational Development
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
JPRA	Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act
LJK	Lok Jagriti Kendra
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act
PESA	Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act
PHIA	Partnering Hope into Action
PVTGs	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
VDP	Village Development Plan



Chapter I

BACKGROUND

Jharkhand meaning 'The Land of the Forest' is a state with 29 per cent tribal population who have their own traditional and social institutions with a strong concept of democratic participation and governance. These traditional institutions have evolved over generations as a self-rule or traditional self-governance system, as referred by scholars and researchers. Few examples of such specific traditional systems are referred to in Box 1. The communities merge their political affairs with social, religious and economic affairs including management and ownership of rich forest resources.

The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996 recognizes the above traditional system and empowers the community. It decentralizes the role of the federal and state governments and allows the community (i.e. Gram Sabha) along with the local administration to make decisions for local development. The PESA is further strengthened through the Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act (JPRA) 2001. The overarching goal is to empower the community and strengthen the local governance system.



Box 1: Traditional Self-Governance

India has a long and strong tradition of local democratic institutions prevailing on ground, even at the village level for self-governance. The Constitution of India also recognises it and the Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy lays down that ‘the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government’.

The state of Jharkhand is no different and such self-governance systems exist. Some of such systems specific to particular tribes are given below.

Traditional Self-Governance Systems In Jharkhand

Munda Manki System Among Ho Tribes

Parha System Among Oraon Tribes

Munda Manki System in Munda Tribes

Manjhi Hadam System in Santhal

Dhoklo System in Kharia Tribes

With the goal to strengthen local self-governance in Jharkhand, Partnering Hope into Action (PHIA) Foundation and Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative envisaged and implemented Gram Swashasan Abhiyan (GSA). The GSA integrates the traditional system with the Constitutional provisions. Its strategic goal is to promote holistic development of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups. The Model provides a clear pathway for the community to lead the desired change through a collaborative approach. Strengthening and institutionalization of Gram Sabha to ensure active participation of all sections (especially vulnerable, marginalized), demand generation, making the service providers accountable and community leadership development is the focus of the project.

The Model aims to contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals # 16.6 - Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; and #16.7 - Ensure responsive, inclusive,



participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

This document is prepared to illustrate the process of implementation of GSA from December 2017 to November 2020 in Jharkhand undertaken by PHIA and partner organisations with funding support from Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiative. This document is prepared as a best practice for knowledge sharing and as a tool for practitioners and policy makers to replicate and scale the initiative in a similar context. It is a step-by-step guide for promoting the agenda of local self-governance and boosting local democracy by following a systemic process and set of interventions.

Chapter II

CONTEXT

Jharkhand is a state in Eastern India which was created on 15 November 2000 as the 28th State of the Union, is the homeland of the tribal who had dreamed of a separate state for a long time. Jharkhand is surrounded by West Bengal in the east, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the west, Bihar in the north and Odisha in the south. Most of the state lies on the Chota Nagpur Plateau, and is the catchment of rivers like Koel, Damodar, Brahmani, Kharkai, and Subarnarekha. It draws its name from being a land with abundant forest with 29 percent of its total geographical area (79,714 square km) being occupied by forests (23,605 square km). Jharkhand is endowed with rich mineral resources like Uranium, Mica, Bauxite, Granite, Gold, Silver, Graphite, Magnetite, Dolomite, Fireclay, Quartz, Feldspar, Coal, Iron, Copper, etc.

Despite having abundant natural resources, Jharkhand is India's sixth-poorest state by per capita income. It has lower literacy, a higher maternal mortality ratio, more open defecation, a larger proportion of stunted children and a smaller proportion of households with access to drinking water and roads. Jharkhand's natural resources are under an incessant and ever-increasing threat from mining and expanding human encroachment and at present it has only 27 per cent area left under forests.

32 tribes inhabit Jharkhand, eight of which belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). 14 of its districts fall under the Fifth Schedule. Creation of Jharkhand as a separate state provided a recognition to the tribal identity and much needed autonomy to its people. However, recognition of their rights has not led to realization due to lesser participation and exercise of these rights.

Jharkhand is only in the second term of its Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), whereas, most of the other states are in the fifth term of PRIs.

Effective implementation of PESA was envisaged to bring forth not only inclusive development but also deepen democracy in Fifth Schedule Areas (box 2). Despite that, approximately after two decades of formulation of Jharkhand as a separate state and having considerable tribal population, still no state-specific rules for PESA have been formulated. Additionally, there hasn't been any considerable efforts towards the enactment of Central Act's provisions.

Historically, Gram Sabhas have been in existence and active in Jharkhand and the traditional governance system still exists in tribal areas. However, the traditional system got undermined due to administrative encroachment and fund flow structure through the Panchayats. Gram Sabha at tola (hamlet) level is not recognized, while the PESA rules recognize/allow for presence of a Gram Sabha at tola level also. Sections 10.1 and 10.5 of the Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act (JPRA), 2001, also talk about the powers of the Gram Sabhas in local decision-making and the implementation of schemes. The traditional Gram Sabhas had no provision/space for particular participation of women, whereas, half the population (women representation) got equivalent value through PESA and JPRA rules by adding conditions like quorum. Still minimal participation of women was noted.

Box 2: Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996

Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996 was formulated in 1996 to provide backbone to the tribal legislation. The PESA Act bestows the Gram Sabhas with absolute powers and the state legislature has been given an advisory role to ensure the proper functioning of the Panchayats and Gram Sabhas. Gram Sabhas are empowered to;

- (i) Protect traditional belief and culture of the tribal communities;
- (ii) Resolution of the local disputes;
- (iii) Prevention of land alienation;
- (iv) Management and protection of the common properties based on their traditions;
- (v) Management of village markets;
- (vi) Rights to control production, distillation, and prohibition of liquor;
- (vii) Exercise of control over money-lending;
- (viii) Any other rights involving the Scheduled Tribes.

As per the Act, the Governor and the State Tribal Advisory Council should follow the harmonious construction of laws and work towards the welfare and give importance to tribal self-governance.



Village is usually formed by joining a colony or group of settlements or a hamlet or group of ancestors, in which people of a community reside and adopt their own traditions and customs. Manage their affairs according to customs (Article 4 (b), PESA Act).

Gram Sabha will be there in every village, including all those persons whose names have been included in the electoral rolls for the panchayat at the village level (Article 4 (c), PESA Act).

There are no existing functional/active Standing Committees (Health, Agriculture, Vigilance, etc) which act as decentralized mechanisms or departments of Gram Sabha for subjective interventions. Ad-hoc committees have been formed and function as government sponsored parallel structures used to undermine the Gram Sabhas.

Village development plan (VDP) formation does not happen democratically, rather it is merely confined to listing of schemes which attracts malpractices such as bribery, manipulation and privileging the better off/dominant communities or persons in beneficiary selection.

While all these legislations provide an enabling environment for tribal to participate in local self-governance, engage in discussions and exercise their rights over their own resources, this is not being realized due to lack of awareness and information among the tribal population of Jharkhand.

In this backdrop, GSA entailing strengthening local self-governance was undertaken in Gumla, West Singhbhum and Jamtara districts of Jharkhand (see figure 1).

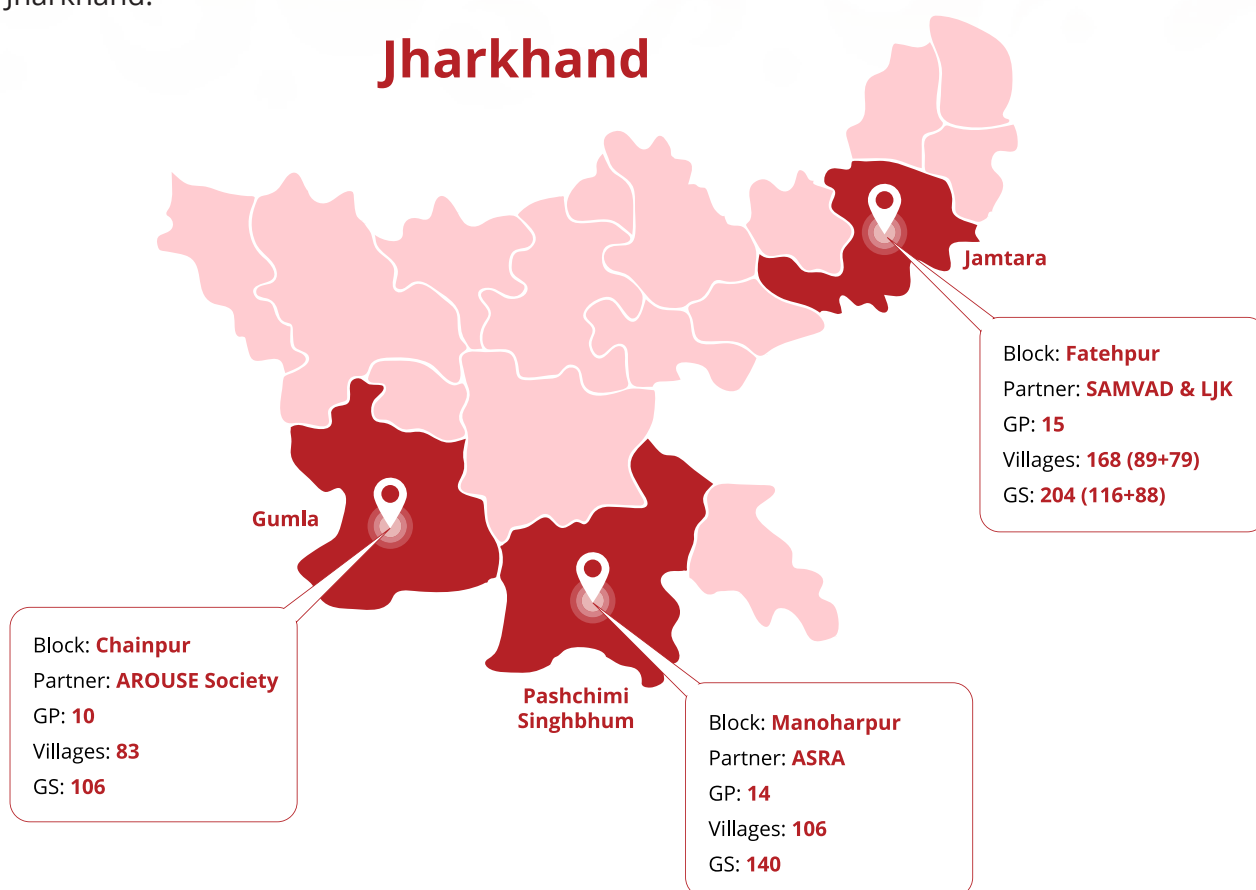


Figure 1: GSA in Jharkhand

GSA was implemented in one block each in each of the three districts by PHIA in collaboration with partners (implementation team) as is elucidated below (table1).

Table 1: A snapshot of GSA intervention

District Name	Number of Blocks	Intervention Block	Number of GP	Intervention Villages	Number of GS	Partner Name
Gumla	12	Chainpur	10	83	106	AROUSE Society
West Singhbhum	18	Manoharpur	14	106	140	ASRA
Jamtara	6	Fatehpur	15	168	204	
				89	116	Samvad
				79	88	Lok Jagriti Kendra

Gumla lies in the western part of Jharkhand and shares a boundary with state capital Ranchi. Chainpur block is a tribal dominated block, located 55 km west of district headquarter Gumla. Chainpur block is surrounded by rivers, brooks, brooklets and forests on all sides. Mainly Oraon tribe dwells in this region while some glimpses of Kharia and Munda tribes are also visible to some extent. AROUSE Society (<http://arousengo.org/>) has been the implementing partner in Chainpur.

West Singhbhum lies in the southern part of Jharkhand and is the largest district in the State. It shares its boundary with the state of Odisha. It has an undulating terrain and deep forests with the majority of its population being tribal. It has 3 sub-divisions and 18 blocks. The district is full of hills alternating with valleys, steep mountains, and deep forests on the mountain slopes. The district contains one of the best Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests. West Singhbhum is the top iron-ore mining district of Jharkhand and according to the latest information of the state mining department, the district produced about 16.3 million tonnes of iron ore in 2017-18. Manoharpur is one of the blocks under the Porahat Chakradharpur sub-division of the district. It is one of the key mining blocks of the district. It is located 76 km west of the district headquarter Chaibasa. According to distribution as per population, Ho tribe is the major tribe found here, followed by Mundas and traces of Santhal and Oraon. Society for Reformation and Advancement of Adivasis (ASRA) has been the implementing partner in Manoharpur (<http://www.asrasocial.in>).

Jamtara is a new district created by separating it from Dumka district in the north east of Jharkhand. It is a district with its boundary with the state of West Bengal on one side. Jamtara is rich in minerals such as stone, Feldspar, Granite, etc.



Fatehpur block is one of the six blocks of Jamtara with 100 percent rural population (89,645), of which 7.72 per cent (6,920) are Scheduled Castes and 46.95 per cent (42,090) Scheduled Tribes (2011 Census. District Census Handbook, Jamtara, Series 21, Part XII B" (PDF). Page 55: Rural PCA – CD block wise village primary census abstract, 2011 census. Directorate of Census Operations Jharkhand. Retrieved 22 October 2020.) with the dominance of the Santhal tribe. It is located 27 km from the district headquarter Jamtara. Presence of sandstone is observed in Fatehpur block. Samvad (<http://www.samvad.net/>) and Lok Jagriti Kendra (LJK) have been the implementing partners in Fatehpur.

Chapter III

Theory of Change

GSA's theory of change is a comprehensive illustration of the desired change that is expected to happen through focused interventions for strengthening local self-governance. It is focused on mapping out what a change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to the desired goal being achieved. The figure 2 explains the theory of change associated with the GSA. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goal and then works back from these to identify all the conditions that must be in place to achieve the goal. The detailed interventions are mapped out in the project framework provided in Annexure I. The clear theory of change and the project framework led to better planning and implementation of GSA.

As illustrated in the theory of change, the interventions and outputs have been mostly completed in the project. The higher-level changes like outcomes and sustainability beyond the life cycle of the project should be captured through a rigorous impact assessment. Nevertheless, there are few stories of change (described in Chapter VII) as anecdotal evidences to show achievement of outcomes, impact and strategic goal. The stories certainly indicate the change some of the communities have witnessed and described within the villages. This also points towards a larger sea of change which is emerging and with time would be visible.



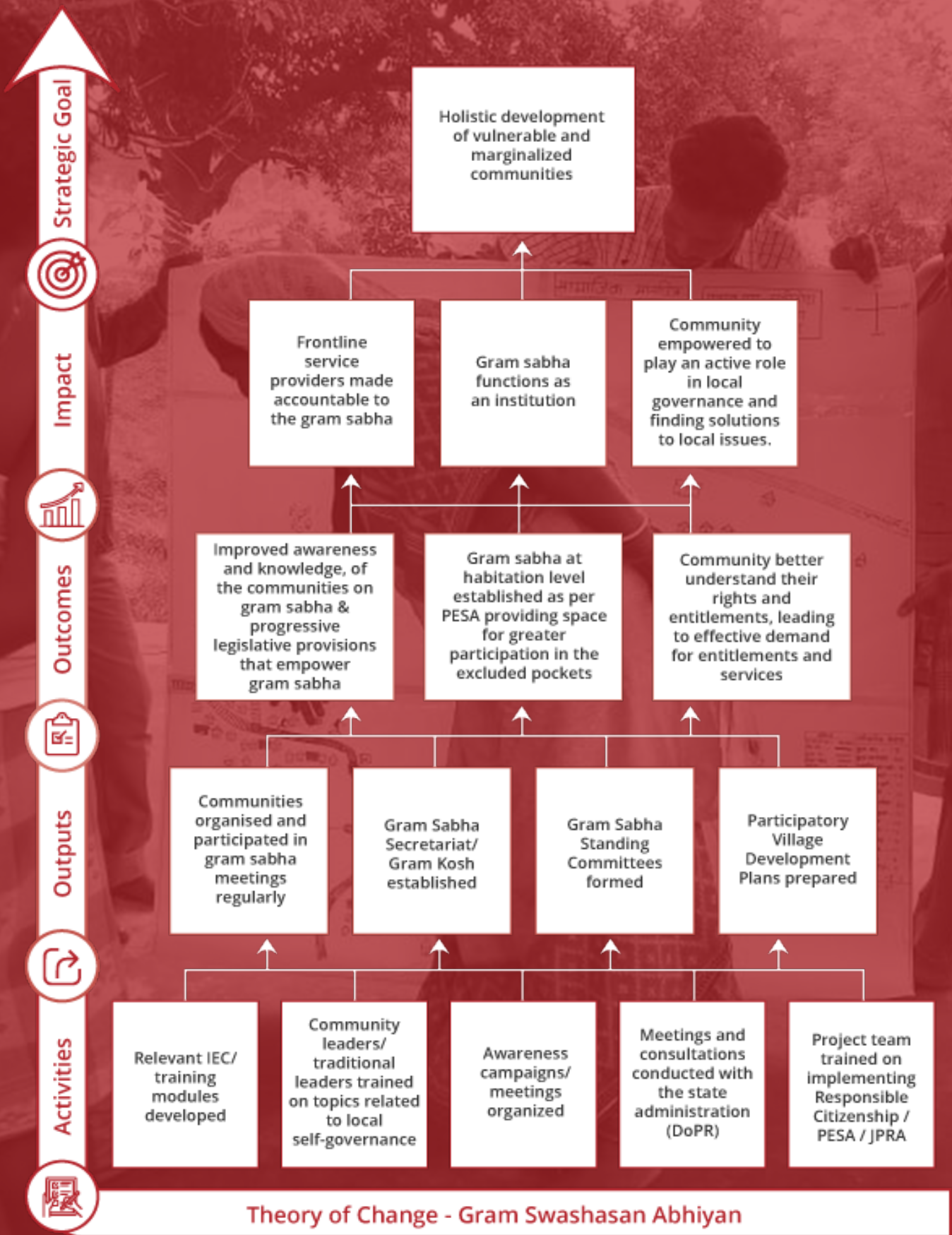


Figure 2: Theory of Change

Chapter IV

Gram Sabha Organisational Development

The Gram Sabhas, the fourth tier of the local self-governance, are the foundation to strengthen local democracy. "Gram Sabha" means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls within the area of Panchayat at the village level. The 73rd Amendment envisages Gram Sabha as the building block of the Panchayati Raj System to perform functions and powers entrusted to it by the State Legislatures. The constitution provides that the Gram Sabha may exercise power and perform functions at the village level as the Legislature of a state may provide. Provisions of the PESA

and JPRA further strengthened the devolution of powers to Gram Sabha.

The laws enshrined in these Acts provide provisions to establish Gram Sabha as an institution of self-governance at the village level (or at the habitation level) including the establishment of its eight standing committees (refer Annex II for the details on roles of the eight Gram Sabha Standing Committees). In GSA emphasis was given to strengthen the institution of Gram Sabha through the process that can be named Gram Sabha Organisational Development (GSOD).



Figure 3: Standing Committees of Gram Sabha

Components of Gram Sabha Organisational Development

The specific interventions carried out to invigorate each of the component are:

1. Strengthening traditional leadership

The traditional leaders have a greater acceptance and recognition within the community. Their engagement and decisions are critical to have wider acceptance and ownership. The project interventions are steered through the traditional leaders and governance mechanism to ensure its acceptability and sustainability with the communities.

2. Ensuring inclusive and better participation of the communities

The idea is to reach out to the habitation level within a revenue village to ensure better participation and representation of the communities. This addressed the issue of lesser participation in Gram Sabhas of certain communities due to remoteness, backwardness and their identities. The GSOD process ensured that the Gram Sabhas are inclusive and open to every member of the village. For instance, in GSA, Gram Sabhas were formed at Tola level too to address the accessibility gap.

3. Build awareness around rights, entitlements and governance

The Gram Sabha is made aware of their rights, entitlements, responsibilities and nuances of governance through various community engagement processes and training. The focus is to enable Gram Sabha to function as an institution with the highest say in deciding and governing the development of the villages and Tolas and facilitating their entitlements.



“We had no idea about Gram Sabha processes and its strength. Now we realise that we have the power and we are the government at our level and with this spirit we are negotiating with the service providers for our rights and entitlements and seeing the results – pensions, electric supply to the village, hand pump repairs, road construction etc. Feeling good about it and we shall make our Gram Sabha much stronger further.”

Babudhan Hansda from Manjhladih village, Fatehpur Block, Jamtara District.



4. Capacity building of Gram Sabha Standing Committees

Eight Gram Sabha standing committees are constituted as per the provisions of JPRA and standing committee members (four in each committee) are identified and capacity building exercises are carried out with them. The capacity building of Gram Sabha standing committee members enables them to function more effectively and bridge the governance gaps.

5. Establishing of Gram Sabha Secretariat



Gram Sabha Secretariats live the ethos of exercising the decision making responsibilities and authority vested in the Gram Sabhas. The establishment of the secretariat is a driving force for the communities to come together and take responsibilities that the constitutional provisions bestow upon them. To further encourage this, the secretariats are equipped with office space, letter heads, etc., to deliver its functions.

The secretariat is owned and managed by the community through “Gram Kosh” the contributory fund maintained by the community for their day to day secretarial expenses. All village level information, minutes registers, and correspondences are maintained at the level of the secretariat ensuring an institutional memory and continuity which is not dependent on individuals.

6. Inclusive Village Development Planning

Annual participatory village development planning with a focus on the need of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised communities was facilitated through hand holding support of the field staff and community leaders to the Gram Sabha.

7. Promote Gram Sabha led initiatives in campaign mode

To ensure that all initiatives are Gram Sabha driven and also to ensure greater accountability and ownership, specific campaigns are conceptualized and facilitated by the community. The Gram Sabhas reviewed the performance of various service providers and addressed issues to ensure that appropriate actions are taken. Responsive and active gram sabhas have the capacity to seek accountability from the service providers.

8. Documentation and Correspondence

The Gram Sabha is encouraged to have their proceedings documented. They are facilitated with registers and mentored on ways to record the meetings of the Gram Sabha and its Standing Committees, usage of their official letterhead and stamp for correspondence with external stakeholders, agencies, etc. Each Gram Sabha is encouraged to raise issues which are discussed and actions are finalised in its meetings and deemed pertinent for taking these up with relevant authorities through formal and official correspondence.



Chapter V

Gram Swashasan Abhiyan (GSA) Implementation Pillars

GSA is designed and implemented based on well-conceived pillars, which are basically the building blocks of the intervention (Figure 4). The five main pillars that can be distilled out of the intervention experiences of this project with a dynamic nature are:

- i) Community-led ownership;
- ii) Team architecture;
- iii) Capacity building;
- iv) Standard operating procedures; and
- v) Engagement with the government.

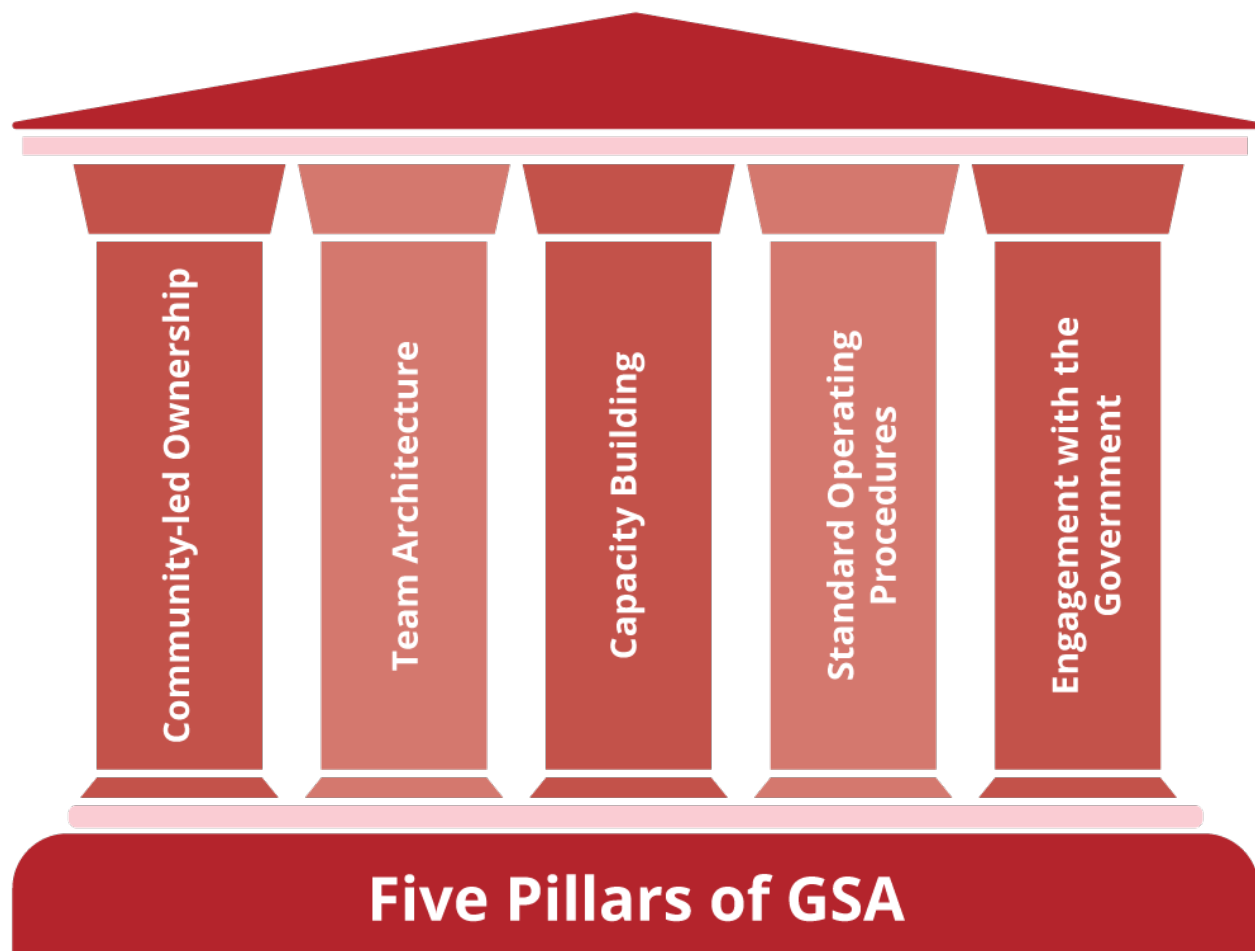
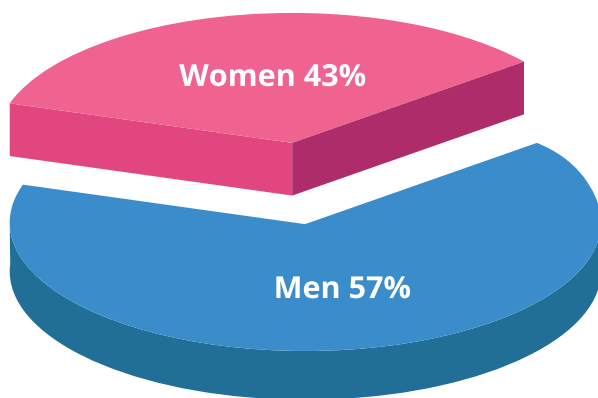


Figure 4: Five Pillars of GSA

This section of the publication provides an understanding of these key five pillars and the project interventions which were built around these.

1. Community-led ownership

The GSA model is based on the critical pillar that self-governance should be essentially owned, led and managed by the community- “of the people, for the people and by the people”. The community is at the forefront of its own development and is the planner, implementer and decision maker as per provisions in applicable laws. In this regard, during the period of 2018-2020 Gram Sabhas in the intervened villages were strengthened.



Graph 1: Gram Sabha attendance according to gender

Inclusive Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabhas in 332 villages are regularly conducting meetings which are inclusive of men, women, and the vulnerable persons and families (refer graph 1 for inclusion by gender). To ensure equitable participation in the functioning of the Gram Sabhas, wealth and vulnerable ranking of families was conducted in all the villages chosen for intervention. This helped in designing interventions based on the socio-economic condition of each household and also helped the Gram Sabhas in inculcating a process of evidence-based planning and decision making for resolving and handling issues.

Outreach to the remotest geographies

GSA was instrumental in reaching out to the remotest corners of the blocks. Gram Sabhas were also conducted at hamlet (i.e. Tola) level. About one-fifth of the Gram Sabhas were conducted at this level. This provided a platform for the communities dwelling in remote pockets not only to understand the importance of local self-governance for the first time but also to participate and contribute to their self-governance, development and decision making processes. In fact, in many places, habitation level Gram Sabhas were conducted for the first time.

“Intervention is very intensive, and I have not witnessed such a deep intervention that reaches up to the habitation level.”

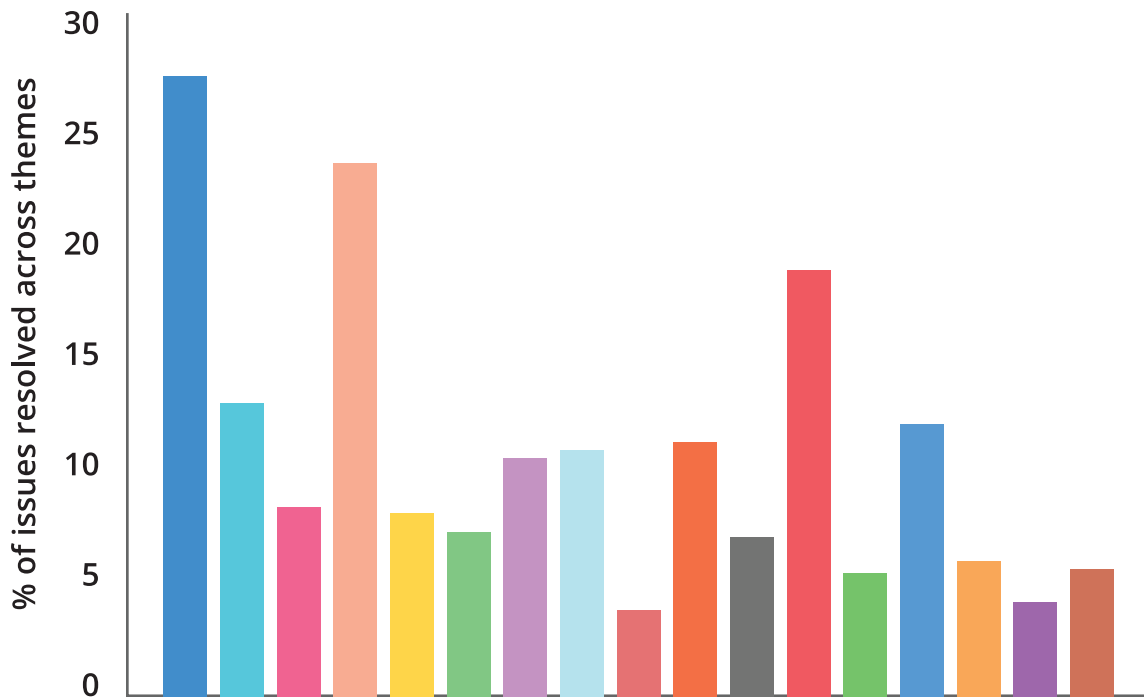
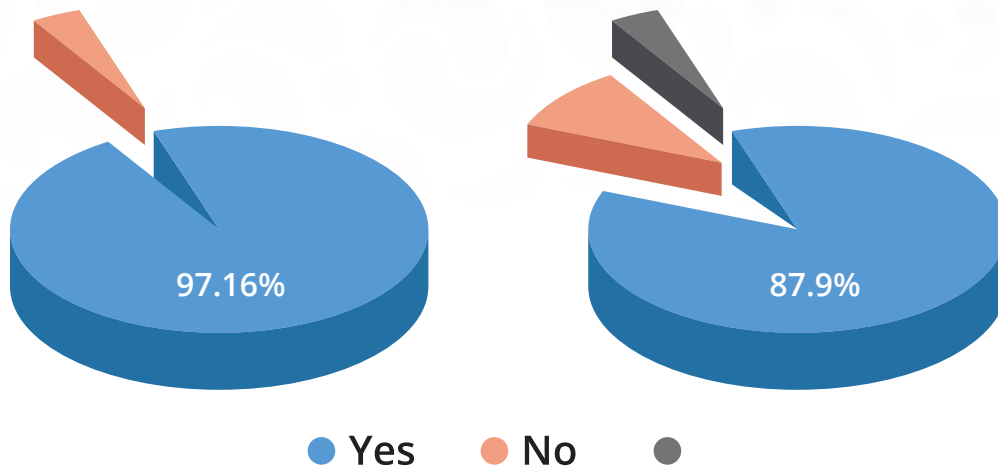
Anurag Behar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation and Vice-Chancellor, Azim Premji University

Active participation of the community

The entire process of reviving and strengthening community institutions made the people feel involved, confident and empowered. The communities were able to follow the process of consultation with various stakeholders and also raise pertinent issues related to their development. The figure 5 shows various types of issues raised and resolved. These were the issues that were raised by the communities themselves and had implications on their day to day lives. The Gram Sabha provided them a forum where they developed their own plans which included budgetary and non- budgetary interventions. Village Development Planning was instrumental in setting up a system of generating a demand based ‘pull’ system.

Atleast one issue was resolved in 97.16% GS

Out of which number of issues resolved by Standing Committees is 87.9%



Jharkhand

- Gram Sabha Processing related
- Sanitation Related
- Rural Infrastructure
- Forest Rights
- Health Related
- Social Security
- Individual Disputes
- Drinking Water
- Women Related
- MGNREGA Related
- Non-Drinking Water
- Village Development Plan
- Community Dispute
- Education
- Social Issues
- Beneficiary List
- Others

Figure 5: Issues raised and resolved through Gram Sabhas

2. Team Architecture

GSA was anchored through an implementation team comprising of team members from PHIA and its four partner organisations. The community (community leaders, traditional leaders, members of Gram Sabha Standing Committees) and the community led institutions (Gram Sabha, Gram Sabha Standing Committees) strengthened during the project were the backbone of GSA.

GSA envisaged the project with staff positions as well as honorary positions which were indispensable to its functioning and achievement of its overall objectives. The team comprised of staff with varied expertise – technical aspects, community engagement, stakeholder management, and project management skills. The project staff was divided at three levels – State, Block and Panchayat (covering entire Villages and Tolas of the Panchayats). The community leaders played a prominent role of change agents at the village and Tola level for grounding the initiative. A detailed team structure along with their roles and responsibilities is provided in Annexure III.

3. Capacity building

GSA was grounded on a clearly structured capacity building of the community and the GSA staff at all levels. Capacity needs of the staff, local institutions and the community were identified with respect to the overall objectives of the GSA and efforts were undertaken to systemically deliver it in the form of awareness campaigns, community meetings, staff meetings for reflection and learning and trainings on rights of the Gram Sabha under the PESA and JPRA, provisions rooted in local democracy from time to time. Thus, strengthening the capacity of the team and beneficiaries including the local institutions was done extensively.

The capacity building was carried out focusing on the community, the staff and pertinent development issues.

Modules were developed to facilitate and standardize this process (Figure 6). At the village level, the community leaders including members of Standing Committees of Gram Sabhas, and other community members were trained in various aspects of local development. The most relevant training topics were citizenship, Provision of the Fifth schedule, PESA, JPRA, Chotanagpur Tenancy Act-Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, VDP and other thematic subjects related to governance.



Figure 6: A snapshot of modules developed for capacity building

4. Standard operating procedures (SOPs)

Establishing the system of standard operating procedures (SOPs) is a core component of GSA, especially when trying to achieve impact at scale. The system with a set of uniform procedures helped in faster implementation, reducing the margin of error and a uniformity of interventions spread across locations, partners and teams. GSA emphasized on developing systems that are uniform across the state which can be replicated in a different context with context specific customization.

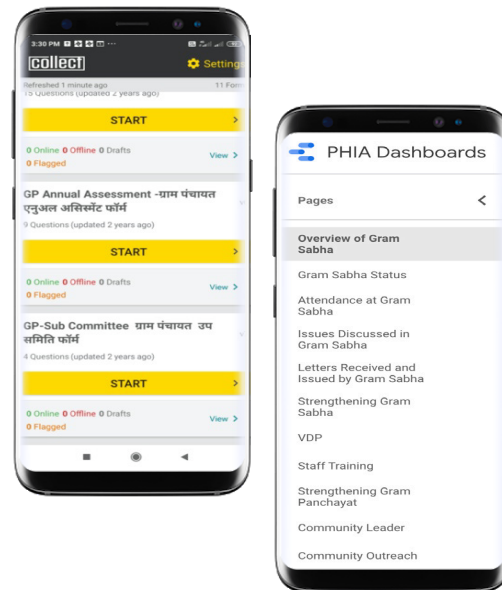
To highlight, some of the key SOPs that were developed in GSA can be categorized into areas of Planning, Evidence-based decision making, and Communication.

The standardized village development plans for planning, Collect App (box 3) for evidenced-based decision making and written formal communication with the Government proved beneficial towards attainment of the GSA objectives. In GSA these are the crucial areas that require a standard set of processes that will help to achieve the intended results. Each set of interventions were further implemented with standard templates designed specifically for the context.



Box 3: Collect App – Real time data for decision making

One of the key interventions of the SOP is the Collect App, an Android-based mobile application designed to capture data relevant to the project. The App collected information about the GSA aligned activities along project parameters. It provided the stakeholders, i.e., the community to review and assess the intervention and the project implementing partners along with the donor, to make the right decision based on the outcomes and results displayed in the Dashboard. Tools like this are the need of the hour. Being equipped with real-time evidence these tools enable stakeholders to be more efficient and accountable.



5. Engagement with the government

GSA has been an amalgam of different stakeholders playing varied roles at all the stages of the project (figure 7). GSA also had linkages with various government departments, such as Department of Panchayati Raj, Block and District

Administration, Department of Rural Development, Forest Department/ Revenue Department, Department of Women and Child Development, people’s representatives, etc. The engagement with the government was primarily through the Gram Sabha and partner organisations that played a pivotal role in linking the Gram

Sabhas to the relevant departments (as per the need articulated by the Gram Sabha).

The GSA focused on regular engagement with the Government institutions at all levels (Block, District and State level) in developing a consensus towards working with Gram Sabha and paying attention to the issues raised by the communities.

Since any tangible or intangible (financial or other) investments in the form of service, facilities and entitlements in the identified villages is sought to be the core responsibility of the government, it was critical that engagement with government was done constructively.

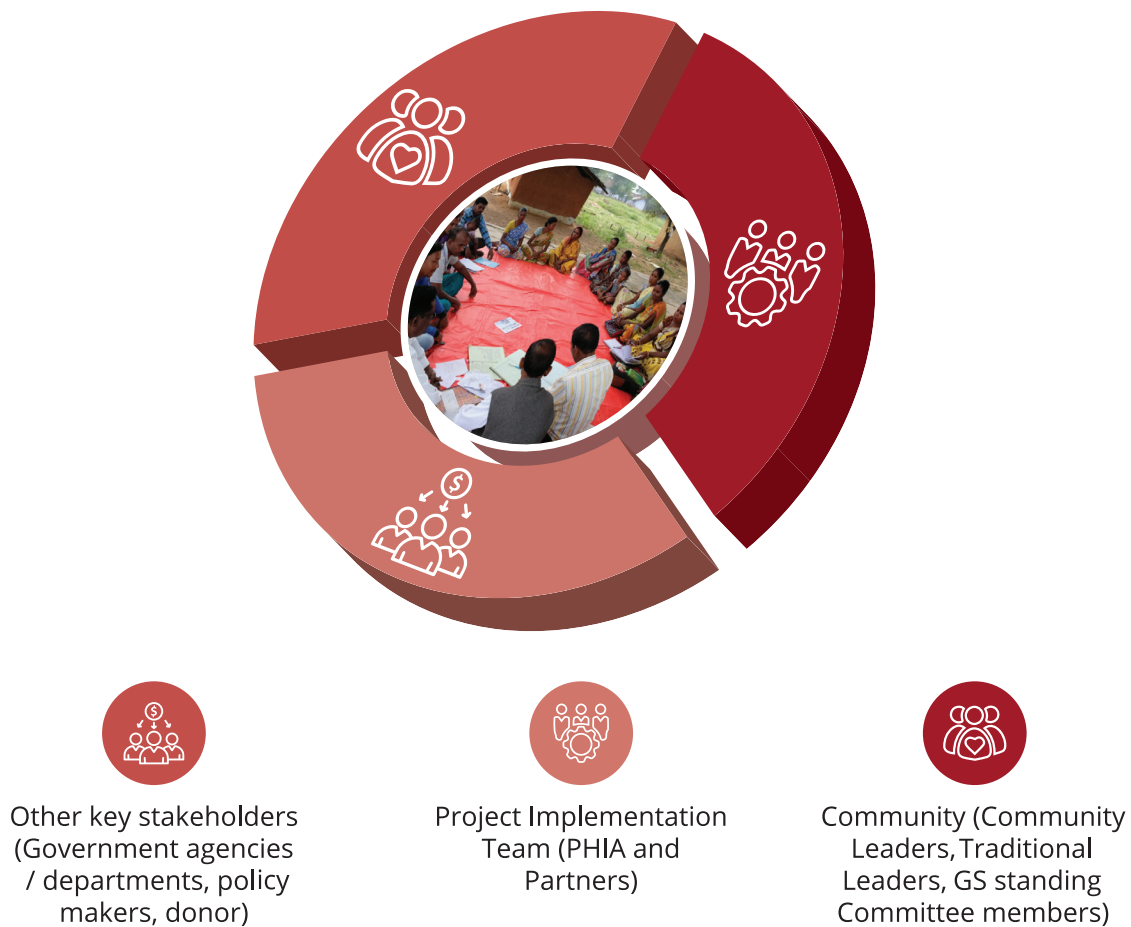


Figure 7: Engagement with the government

A critical intervention was to handhold Gram Sabhas to follow a style of written communication rather than a verbal communication with the administration, service providers and other line departments. The written style of communication resulted in preparing VDPs and submitting them to the Panchayats for approval.

The submission of VDPs to the government and their approval demonstrates the community's ability to engage with the Government effectively. The table 2 provides a snapshot of VDPs prepared and approved. Most of the VDPs are awaiting approval, which got affected due to the COVID-19 lockdown.



Table 2: VDPs prepared and approved

VDPs prepared	VDPs approved
# of Revenue Villages submitted VDPs to the Government	348 (11 in year 1 and 337 in year 2)
Total funds requested through VDPs	INR 235.4 crores
Percentage VDPs approved by the Government against the total requested amount (as on March 2020)	29 %

(Source: Collect App)

Chapter VI

Stakeholders and their Roles

Though GSA was centered around the institutional development of an inclusive and vibrant Gram Sabha and outreach to the unreached habitations and Tolas (i.e., hamlets) of the intervention blocks, both external and internal stakeholders played a key role at different stages of the project (table 3).

Different stakeholders had varied interactions and influence on each other. It would not have been possible to ground the GSA and make it visible if government agencies at the block, district and state level didn't play a key role in the roll out of the GSA.

Table 3: Stakeholders and their roles in GSA

	Internal Stakeholders (Key to Implementation)		External Stakeholders (Key to Legitimacy and Scaling Up)	
Stakeholders	Community and its Institutions	Project Implementation Team - PHIA Foundation - Partners (AROUSE, ASRA, LJK, and SAMVAD)	Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives	- Government Agencies of Jharkhand - Tribes Advisory Council, Government of Jharkhand
Level	- Community, Tola, and Village	- Village, Block, District, and State	Remotely	- Block, District, and State
Composition	- Community Leaders, - Traditional Leaders, - Gram Sabha, and - Gram Sabha Standing Committee members	- Panchayat Facilitators - MIS Data Operators (Incentive Based) - Assistant Project Coordinators - Project Coordinators - Block Technical Coordinators - MIS cum Documentation officer - Technical Support Officer - Project Lead	Donor representative	- Core to GSOD: Department of Panchayati Raj, Department of Rural Development, Department of Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Minority and Backward Class Welfare - Peripheral initially but core to GS Standing Committees: Department of Forest, environment and Climate Change, Department of health, medical education and family welfare, Department of Revenue, Registration and Land Reforms, Department of School Education and literacy development, Department of Women, Child Development and Social Security, etc. - Line Departments: Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Food, Public Distribution and consumer affairs, etc.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community level change agents, - Participate in field level activities, -Attending trainings on provisions of different Acts pertaining to local self-governance, - Facilitate the monthly Gram Sabha meetings, - Initiating the process of Village Development Plans, -Leading Gram Sabha campaigns, fostering correspondence, etc., and -Interface meetings with PRI representatives, executive members at Panchayats and block officials at block level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and Implementation of project activities, -Review, reporting, documentation and internal monitoring of the project plans and achievements. - Initiating the process of development of Village Development Plans, -Conduct thematic trainings and orientation programs under the project. - facilitating periodic meetings of Gram Sabha, - Liaising for requisite institutional support from the block administration, - Coordination with the donor and government agencies at state level, - Advocacy at all levels and flagging gaps (lack of proper structural and technical support in area of local and traditional self-governance) with wider audience, - Initiating the Community led Campaigns on FRA 2006; Work Demand under MGNREGA; Social Security Schemes (Pension) and Campaign against Alcoholism, and - Organize events such as International Indigenous People’s day, “Abua Raj Mela” and “Jan Sunwai”/ Jan Samvad, Samvidhan Samvad to draw a common synergy with respect to local self-governance and constitutional provisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support, - Monitoring and evaluation, - Facilitation of setting up of Decision and Support System (Collect App), - Strategic guidance and appraisal through annual reviews and six-monthly progress reports and review meetings, - Initiating a programme on Individual Fellowship for strengthening and promoting constitutional values, and - organizing cross visits for Local Democracy (LD) partners- (Transform Rural India Foundation -TRIF visited GSA intervention areas while the GSA team visited Foundation for Ecological Security {FES}). for fostering cross learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sanctions and approvals to the Village Development Plans prepared by the Gram Sabha by the Department of Panchayati Raj, - Aligning the functioning of the gram Sabha as the 4th tier of Panchayati Raj within the JPRA, - Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand issued a calendar for the Gram Panchayat Development Plans to be facilitated in Jharkhand in 2018, - Sanctions, settling claims and providing clearances on issues raised by Gram Sabha by the appropriate departments to help in establishing Gram Sabha as an institution and enhancing people’s confidence in the Gram Sabha, - Participation in events organised by PHIA and its partners at different levels to lend legitimacy to these events and foster learning, exchange and linkages between the personnel of these departments and project implementation team and the community led institutions, and -Capacity building of the GSA team members on Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) as Core certified District and Block level trainers.
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PHIA and its partners not only paved the way for the community to interact with the external stakeholders but also helped in aligning the processes adopted in GSOD to overall functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and legitimacy of

GSOD. GSA staff were quite successful in making inroads into developing a reciprocal relationship with the Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand at the Block and District level (box 4).

Box 4: Reciprocal relationship with the Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand

A process for signing a non-financial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was initiated between the Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Jharkhand and PHIA foundation in the mid of 2019. With support from the department, the project team participated in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) training. The project implementation team comprising representatives from PHIA and its partners in GSA participated in a 3-day structured training in five batches in October 2019. The training was organized at state and subdivision level. Thereafter, PHIA team members and Project Coordinators, Block Technical Coordinators, are now a part of the District training team while Assistant Project Coordinators are a part of Block Training Team on GPDP.

Engagement with the external stakeholders was part of the strategy adopted by the project team. These were done through:

Fostering alignment and convergence with various government agencies at all levels through the Gram Sabha as an institution

A multi-pronged approach was adopted to align and harmonize the project with government agencies and establish requisite synergies during the project period through the Gram Sabha as an institution. Some of the government agencies were core to the GSOD, such as the Department of Panchayati Raj, whereas, some were peripheral initially but would assume greater importance with the progression of time (as illustrated in table 3). Apart from these, Gram Sabha were also encouraged to establish linkages with the

relevant line departments (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of Food, Public Distribution and consumer affairs, etc.) on issues raised by the Gram Sabha in its monthly meetings or through village development plans. The necessary handholding support and mentoring was provided by the project implementation team.



State Engagement through Setting up Programme Advisory Committee

This committee (box 5) was set up to facilitate the engagement with the state level policy makers and influencing senior leadership in the state with the objectives to:

- Provide strategic guidance and direction to the project implementation team for successful roll out of the program,
- Advise on policy issues and support in recommendation for changes on policies pertaining to governance and democracy,
- Support in engaging and establishing partnership and collaboration with the state government / line departments to provide support in establishing relationship with other civil society platforms and networks in Jharkhand, and
- Establish and maintain partnerships with other stakeholders (CSO networks, donors and Private Sectors) for scale up initiatives.



Box 5: Composition of Programme Advisory Committee

1. Dr. Ramesh Sharan, Vice Chancellor Vinoba Bhave University Hazaribagh, Development Economist, Member of the State MGNREGA Council and Advisor to State Rural Livelihoods Mission.
2. Mr. Ratan Tirkey, former member of Jharkhand Tribal Advisory Council (TAC), Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand.
3. Mr. Anand Kumar Bolimera, Honorary Director, PHIA Foundation and CEO, Change Alliance.
4. Mr. Johnson Topno, Regional Head of Programmes and State Manager of Jharkhand Unit, PHIA Foundation.

Special Invitee Member

Ms. Vandana Dadel, IAS, Secretary, Commercial Taxes Department and former Secretary, Department of Panchayati Raj and Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand.

Chapter VII

GSA Milestones and Stories of Change

Milestones

From the project implementers' perspective, it is crucial to identify the key milestones (or measurable outputs) to be assessed to ensure that the project is moving in the right path. Although the Theory of Change of GSA (presented in figure 2, chapter III) highlights the changes envisaged, and the subsequent subsection expounds the different activities carried out under GSA and provides an overview of change envisaged, the project selected more detailed specific milestones. Based on the pivotal milestones, the project stakeholders were able to gauge the path of the GSA.

This section illustrates the key milestones that were adopted in GSA.

The project framework has identified milestones for the areas where impact should be visible. These areas as per the project framework are Community, Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Village Plan and, Coordination and programme impact. The key milestones related to these areas for the three years of the project are shown in figure 8. For detailed milestones please refer to Project Framework in Annexure I. The first four quarters managed to achieve the milestones that were scaled up in the latter part of the project. The focus in the first year was on building standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the capacity of the community, community institutions and project staff. This approach was adopted to primarily lay down the foundation for scaling up of the interventions later on.





Figure 8: GSA Milestones

Stories of Change

Story 1: A single step is all it took towards a journey of development in Lupungpaat: Formation of Gram Sabha

Lupungpaat, a remote forest village in Chainpur block of Gumla district is inhabited by the Asur Tribe. The Tribe is among the nine Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) found in Jharkhand. As per 2011 census, the Tribe has a total population of around 23,000 in Jharkhand. With decades of neglect from the Government and no local economic development, the Tribe has been living in extreme poverty with no access to basic infrastructure like access to safe drinking water, electricity, roads and the list goes on. Numerous cases of children missing from their villages have been reported with no information whether they are alive or not. Stories of Asur people affected due to human trafficking is ubiquitous. The lives of the residents of Lupungpaat is no different.

Three years ago, when team members from GSA (PHIA and AROUSE) arrived in the village, the inhabitants of Lupungpaat were completely clueless of how to react. They were not only scared to come out of their houses but also averse to engaging in a conversation with strangers. When some of the project team members, who are familiar with the vernacular language, made the effort to build the trust, the villagers slowly opened up. With regular interaction with the GSA team, the community gradually understood their novel agenda.

The terms like Gram Sabha, Panchayati Raj, Forest Rights Act, and other schemes of the Government were new to the Community, although they were familiar with some of the more common dole out schemes of the Government like MGNREGA.

In a few months, the villagers embraced the idea of Gram Swashasan Abhiyan. They started to participate in the process of Gram Sabha and followed some of the best practices like establishing the Gram Sabha secretariat, engaging in written communication with the Government, etc. The Village Development Plan of Lupungpaat was also prepared and submitted to the Government for approval.

After a year many changes are clearly visible in Lupungpaat. The village is now connected with an all-weather road, all the houses have electricity and a water supply system. The Gram Sabha secretariat has appropriate information about the Government schemes and how to access those. Most of the elderly in the village are getting support through the Old Age Pension Scheme.

The Lupungpaat Community is encouraged by the changes they have witnessed and are hoping more development interventions will be taken up by the Government. However, they also recognize the fact that constant engagement with the Government and other stakeholders to transform their village is a must. The community feels that the long journey towards development has begun with a single step, i.e. by forming a vibrant Gram Sabha. They are ready to commit themselves to the ethos of Gram Swashasan Abhiyan.

Story 2: Making service providers accountable to Gram Sabha (GS): Villagers of Malam: Can't wait to deliver their own rations!

Malam is a village in Chainpur Block of Gumla district in Jharkhand, India. It is situated 6km away from Chainpur and 70km away from district headquarter Gumla. Malam village was recognized as a gram panchayat in 2009. The total geographical area of the village is 1946.95 hectares and a total population of 1,309 people. There are about 258 houses in Malam village.

The nearest public or private bus service is more than 5 km away for the villagers. After climbing down from Malam to the ration dealers' shop located 5 km away in the foothills of the village, often on foot, the Oraon tribal families of Malam were riddled with multiple problems. They were grappling not only from an arduous journey to receive their entitlements but also in availing the ration from the PDS shop as per their entitlement.



The distribution of ration used to be often delayed on the whim of the shopkeeper. Additionally, the shopkeeper was giving 2 kg less of Rice per family but also charging Rs 15 per bag from each beneficiary. Every month the shopkeeper was charging 5 kg of ration in the guise of/in lieu of compensation for the costs he incurred

National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013 envisions "ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity". In an attempt to realize those objectives, Jharkhand government with its hilly and inaccessible terrain, and most tribal – especially PVTGs – spread across small hamlets in remote parts, started the Dakia scheme in 2017. It mandated the doorstep delivery of 35 kg rice to over 70,000 PVTG families across 25 districts. A budget of Rs 6.32 crore was allocated to transport and package food grain. The poor implementation of this scheme, however, has done very little to reduce food security.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/in-jharkhand-schemes-neglected-while-hunger-flares-in-the-countryside-118122700358_1.html

on transportation and payments to government officials. When some of them protested against these malpractices the dealer abused them and also forced some of them to work in his field without any remuneration.

In April 2020, the Gram Sabha of Malam brought forth the issue of irregularities in the distribution of the ration by the ration dealer. This issue was then brought up in one of the Gram Sabha meetings. Then it was decided through a GS resolution to bring this to the attention of the relevant authority and get a redressal to their problem. The panchayat facilitator took this issue verbally with the block development office (BDO) Chainpur. Despite several rounds of stating and discussing the problem still there was no response.

After discussion with the team members of AROUSE working closely with the Gram Sabha it was decided that the Gram Sabha being a constitutional body should have a formal correspondence with the relevant authority. The Gram Sabha, then sent a letter to the BDO on its letter-head along with its official stamp. It also attached the Gram Sabha resolution to this effect and requested the BDO to take corrective measures. Panchayat facilitator from Malam as well the GP representative along with the block technical coordinator from PHIA / AROUSE went many times to the block office to pursue this issue.

A watershed decision was taken by the BDO of Chainpur to hand over the PDS shop to the self-help group (SHG) of Malam.

Henceforth, they stripped the dealer of this right and sanctioned the handling of the PDS shop by the SHG. Soon, the PDS operations would be taken over by the SHG.

The AROUSE team started to work in Malam village in February 2018 under the Gram Swashasan Abhiyan (GSA) and reconstituted the gram Sabha and standing committees in this village. It also started conversations and interaction with the BDO side by side. Initially the response from the block authorities was lukewarm. However, in two years' time all the relevant people in the block office not only recognize the people working in the GSA but have also started to give cognizance to the issues raised by them and the Gram Sabha.



Story 3: Long road to better health services for the people of Chotanagra

Chotanagra village in Manoharpur block of West Singhum district is located within the iron-ore mines of Jharkhand. The mines have been boosting the Government's revenue for many decades. Despite this, there hasn't been much improvement in the lives of people of the region. The nearest town where the people of Chotanagra can access better health services is the city of Rourkela, 84 kilometers away in the neighbouring state of Odisha.

In 2008, the Government had approved to build and improve the health infrastructure in Chotanagra Panchayat. The envisaged investment will provide better health services to more than 16,000 people of 32 villages mostly tribal. However, the construction of the sanctioned infrastructure was abruptly stopped after initial hustle and bustle. With no information about its completion the road to better health services is still long. And without any further progress in the

construction of the hospital people have become dispassionate about the idea. During one of the community meetings the topic of the incomplete infrastructure was brought up. Although the villagers felt the promise made a decade ago is still far from being honored, they were unsure of the steps they can take to make it happen. The villagers, however, unanimously agreed that they will have to do something.

The community leaders of 32 villages organized a collective meeting and decided to organize a meeting with the local administration. The Gram Sabhas by exercising their powers wrote a letter about the same to the administration and requested for a joint consultation.

After numerous rounds of formal communication (both written and face-to-face meetings) and follow up with the local administration community consultation was organized. In the consultation, it was agreed and assured by the Government representative that the project will be reinstated. Subsequently, the government has resumed the construction of the facility so that operations will begin in 2021.



The chain of activities right from awareness building on local self-governance, training to understand the provisions of Gram Sabha, dialogue with local administration, and eventually seeing the hospital which as promised a decade ago is being constructed again have made the community realize the strength of self-governance.

The meaningful dialogue initiated by the Gram Sabhas compelled the administration to be supportive. The process of written communication and consultation helped the community understand the process of quality engagement.

Story 4: Gram Sabha comes forward to protect its inhabitants from becoming homeless

Bamandiha 'Gram Panchayat' in Fatehpur block of Jamtara district in Jharkhand was witness to a process of an empowered Gram Sabha coming forward and protecting its inhabitants from an imminent threat of homelessness. 11 families belonging to Pahariya tribe, a PVTG, were settled in village Turka by its Gram Sabha almost two decades ago. They were also provided 0.3 acres of land for settling in the village and meeting their needs of shelter. This arrangement was approved by the then Circle Officer of Fatehpur. In 2018, the Pahariya families got a rude awakening when they were served a notice by the Circle Officer, Fatehpur to evacuate on the premise that the land in which they were residing was a common property resource (CPR) meant to be used as a common grazing land by the villagers. In 2019, the Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) issued a notice for eviction. The notice was a very threat to their survival, as it meant non-compliance of the order from the government on one hand and compliance would mean homelessness for so many families on the other hand.

This matter was resolved through community action. The issue was brought forth to the Gram Sabha and a meeting was organized to hear the grievance of the community and take corrective action. Thereafter, the Gram Sabha made an official communication to the Circle Officer, Fatehpur marking a copy to Sub Divisional Officer mentioning that "as per the provisions of PESA and 5th schedule areas of the Constitution, 'Gram Sabha' has the power to manage all CPRs within the village boundary. In addition, 'Gram Sabha', has an authority to decide on the management of all-natural resources in the 5th schedule area."



The Gram Sabha is and will not be the silver bullet for all problems but certainly through GSA the community is determined to take responsibility and find solutions, which is an integral part of strengthening local self-governance.



Subsequently, there hasn't been any response from the administration. However, the Pahariya families are still residing in the village without any fear. This has not only helped the community resolve an issue which was quite pertinent for them and their own but also helped in boosting their confidence and fostering their conviction on the importance of Gram Sabha. They have gradually started to believe in their own control over themselves and their lives, 'Hamara Gaon, Hamari Sarkar' (our village, our governance).

Story 5: ICDS Centre made functional by women through Gram Sabha

Khijuria Village in the Fatehpur Panchayat of Fatehpur block of Jamtara district is a melting pot of heterogeneous population and is bifurcated into 4 habitations (tribal, minorities, non-tribal population). Its ICDS/ Anganwadi Centre was closed for more than a year and the community was deprived of many health services. The women and

children had to struggle for basic maternal and child health services like, pre-natal care and post-natal care, check-up at village level, health check-up of adolescent girls (mostly for anemia, vaccination, distribution of nutrition supplements, etc.), etc.

Women of Khijuria village raised the issue of unavailability of basic health services that are accessible to them and their children due to a dysfunctional ICDS center in the Gram Sabha. After discussion and deliberation, the Gram Sabha sent an official query to the District Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), questioned the negligence of the ICDS worker and asked for immediate action/ redressal.

Due to the intervention of the Gram Sabha through a proper channel, this issue was addressed within ten days and ICDS Centre was brought to function with all the legitimate services. This story also highlights the crucial role of women's participation in Gram Sabha.

Chapter VIII

Lessons Learnt

There are many learnings that have emerged from the implementation of GSA and highlighting them becomes quite important in a wider context and provides key insights for scaling up similar interventions. The lessons from the GSA also elucidate the key challenges that are likely to occur while replicating/scaling up the intervention elsewhere. Some of the key learnings are:

Gram Sabha Secretariats provide a platform to communities

Establishing Gram Sabha as an institution (the fourth tier of PRIs) with an official identity and set up in the form of Gram Sabha Secretariat has been a 'first of its

kind' initiative in the context of Jharkhand. So far, only Gram Panchayats (the third tier of PRIs) have had this privilege. The Gram Sabha secretariats are a meeting place for its members (GS, Gram Sabha Standing Committee) to meet, deliberate, develop plans, formulate official correspondence, and house appropriate documents.

In this process, communities (even in far flung remote locations) have started to internalize that they have control over their own resources ('jal jangal jameen') and Gram Sabha has an integral role over its (village/habitation) resources. The box 6 clearly illustrates this behavioral change taking place in some of the intervention villages. Chapter VII also has some of the stories which highlight this aspect. However,

Box 6: Gram Sabha gaining control over their resources

Issues Faced by the community: The contractors would collect sand from the river flowing by the village Harirakha in Dumaria Gram Panchayat in Fatehpur block of Jamtara district. Panchayat Secretary misled the community that the revenue from the sand is submitted to the revenue department. The reality was that the village resource was being looted by the contractors involving the Panchayat Secretary.

Community Action: A special 'Gram Sabha' was called by Traditional leaders 'Manjhi Hadam' where the Panchayat Secretary, ward members, community leaders, panchayat facilitator and more than 150 'Gram Sabha' members were present. A resolution was passed and decision was taken that gram sabha would collect Rs. 100 per tractor. The tractor owners would have to seek the permission of Gram Sabha for sand collection against the issuance of a challan/ payment receipt.

Change: The collective decision of 'Gram Sabha' has resulted in a generation of Rs. 4,300 as Gram Kosh so far. It has given the community the much-needed moral boost up. Thereafter, Harirakha 'Gram Sabha' has managed to apply for 16 widow pensions, 20 old age pension, and 4 pension forms for persons with disability. All these application forms and supporting documents were photo copied through the support of Gram Kosh. There has also been a learning of ownership on village resources by the Gram Sabha.

in terms of implications for scaling up, merely setting up Gram Sabha Secretariat would not ensure success of the endeavour. Steps should be taken to provide similar handholding support to communities as illustrated in the GSOD model (chapter IV) and highlighted in other sections of this document.

Constructive Engagement with the government as an institution is a time taking process

GSA has invigorated the community's understanding and their willingness to engage in reiterative, constructive dialogues with the state/government agencies for resolving critical issues and taking decisions. The project has demonstrated that the communities can engage with the government to voice their opinion and raise demands (based upon their needs) if proper platforms/institutions (Gram Sabha) are established to assist in planning (VDPs) and communicating. This has also resulted in a positive response from the Government.



However, one of the bottlenecks encountered during the GSA has been that sometimes the momentum of the community driven process gets derailed due to the long response time of the bureaucracy. The bureaucratic system takes its own course for approval and in certain cases might take longer than the project

period. And then beyond that for final sanctions and implementation of the sanctions. Thus, it is premature to expect real tangible impacts (such as allotment of land under FRA, better access to health services, etc.) without the requisite investments/ intervention from the Government. There should be a next phase of GSA to build upon these initiatives, prioritize these and provide hand-holding support to the community.

Need for sharing Decision support systems with the community

One of the key highlights of the GSA has been the creation of the decision support system dashboard called Collect App. The more impactful use of the data could have been to share it with the community (i.e. Gram Sabha) to reflect on their own progress according to parameters defined as per the dashboard. This could trigger better understanding of the local self-governance participation within the community and hence encourage their participation.

Need for updating Community frequently on laws, procedures and policies

Local democracy thrives on continuous participation of the community and regular engagement with the Government. This would be possible only if the community is aware of the local and national laws and policies pertinent to their lives, changes in these laws and policies as well as changes in the bureaucratic structures. There is an intricate web of government agencies that exist at all levels (district, state and national) and are funded differently (center-state, state, center, etc.) which is often less understood not only by the communities but also by the office bearers of the

Panchayats and Gram Sabhas as well. This knowledge needs to be enhanced frequently to align their knowledge with these structures and changes in these, if any. The GSA has been able to train the communities quite well in the present context. The communities will certainly need hand-holding support at regular intervals bi-annually or annually to update their knowledge.

Quicker response time during COVID-19

The unprecedented challenges that emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown have not been witnessed before in the history of independent India. Neither the Government nor the communities were prepared to cope during such extraordinary times and it was extremely challenging especially for the poor and vulnerable population. The capacity that was built of both the community and the implementing agencies (through setting up systems in place, redressal mechanisms, decentralized decision making, coordination, etc., in GSA) helped tremendously and contributed in rolling out relief activities quickly during the lockdown.



Selection of right partners and project staff

As envisaged at the beginning of the project PHIA partnered with organisations that had a strong presence in the specific intervention blocks, had worked on issues close to local democracy and are working closely with the tribal and the vulnerable. While selecting the partners one of the criteria was to select an organization that was led by people belonging to the tribes of Jharkhand apart from having viable financial and administrative systems in place. This was a difficult scenario as such organisations were thin on the ground.

The selection of project staff at key positions was also quite rigorous keeping in mind the role each one would have to play at all stages of the project. Personnel with empathy for a rights-based approach were selected and special preference was given to those who had ‘first-hand’ experience, that is, who were themselves from the PVTG tribes. However, GSA was a little bit weaker on the representation of women at all staff positions, especially at the top most positions of the project. Since an important aspect of the GSA was to enhance the participation of women in the Gram Sabha, the project would have been enriched with more women staff at all key positions.

Need for a Platform for sharing and cross-learning

The experiences, insights and knowledge generated from the GSA have been mostly shared within the project team, with the community and the donor. Since the GSA started something unique (GSOD) in Jharkhand, not many stakeholders had prior experience to such an initiative. However, there hasn't been much cross learning within the project (different blocks in different geographical locations), especially at the level of panchayat facilitators and

the community. Dissemination of learnings from the project to a wider audience would have helped in quicker acceptance and recognition of Gram Sabha as an institution. Moreover, helping the Gram Sabha collectively reflect and learn would have added momentum to the project and would have helped in instilling a sense of solidarity within the communities.

Setting up a platform for sharing and fostering cross learning at different levels is needed to capitalize on the experiential learnings. This would have also led to recognition of the efficacy of similar initiatives at a larger scale by the policy makers and the other communities. For example, the process of village development planning initiated by different communities would have provided many useful insights based upon concrete evidence to other communities, bureaucrats, policy makers, etc.

While scaling up, project design should include setting up such a platform at the beginning of the project and involving multiple stakeholders at various levels.

Building resilience in projects to cope with unforeseen events and challenges

The beginning of the project coincided with the Pattalgarhi movement and the project implementation team had to work silently so as to not attract the governments' wrath and being misunderstood. The third year of the project saw the COVID-19 lockdowns and subsequent struggles continue. These unusual circumstances brought forth many challenges (such as Pattalgarhi movement being a major impediment in forging strategic state engagement) which couldn't have been foreseen at the time of conceptualization of the project. Projects should have the in-built flexibility to deal and respond to such challenges. Building capacity of the core staff to cope with disasters and challenges should be part of the project design.



Annexure I

The Project Framework

Table A1: Stakeholders and their roles in GSA

Areas	Milestones (Measurable Output)	Timelines	Indicators	Means of verification
Community	Appropriate agency/ experts identified for module development on community leadership in context of PESA/ JPRA.	Year 1 Q1	No. of ToRs developed	Terms of Reference (ToR)
	Module on CB of community leaders developed in consultation with partners	Year 1 Q1	No. of modules developed	Training module on Capacity Building of community leaders
	Community leaders identified at the gram Sabha level in all villages/ hamlets	Year 1 Q2	No. of leaders identified	List of identified leaders
	Village meetings (monthly) are organized in 1075 hamlets (tolas) lying in 357 villages - at partner level	Entire duration of project	No. of meetings organized	Meeting minutes
	Regular meetings of CBOs in 357 villages to facilitate discussion on PRI systems, PESA governance systems - at partner level	Entire duration of project	No. of CBO meetings organized	Meeting minutes in CBO register
	Organize block level Jan Samvads, once in a year - at partners level	Year 1 Q4, Year 2 Q4, Year 3 Q3	No. of Jan Samvad organized at block level	Report of the event, Media clips, Photographs
Gram Panchayat	Sub committees of the GP formed at each GP and strengthened	Year 1 Q4	No. of framework developed	Framework
	Assessment framework developed for mapping all the GPs to access the performance of the gram panchayats and subsequent gaps	Year 2 Q1	Assessment framework finalized to be used in the process of mapping	Assessment framework
	Knowledge/awareness among GP members about vulnerable group development index	Year 1 Q3	Vulnerability group development index developed for GPs and villages	Consultation report/ participant list
	Women panchayat members actively participate in decision making process	Year 2 Q1	No. of ToR	Terms of reference
	No. of actions/policies adopted by the GP that are gender sensitive	Year 2 Q1	No. of agency/ consultant hired	Signed contract
	Knowledge/behaviour change among women panchayat members (empowerment assessment)	Year 2 Q1	No. of modules developed	Training module

Village Plan	Agency/ consultant identified for developing the framework for participatory approach to village planning	Year 2 Q1	No. of ToR	Terms of reference
	Framework for participatory approach to village planning developed	Year 2 Q1	No. of agency/ consultant hired	Signed contract
	Needs and concerns of vulnerable and marginalized groups are covered in the village plans	Year2, Q2	No. of tools developed	Verification of requisite guideline/ formats
	Village development plans prioritized most applicable sectors depending on the needs of the community	Year 2 Q2	No. of staff trained	Participant list, training report
	Active participation of community leaders in the planning process	Year 2 Q3, Year 3 Q2	No. of orientation trainings held	Training reports
Coordination and programme impact	Lead and partner level Monitoring systems streamlined	Year 1, Q1		
	Agency/ consultant identified for MIS development	Year 1, Q1	No. of agency/ consultant hired	Signed contract
	Project team deepened their understanding on local self-governance (PESA 1996, JPRA 2001, and role of PRIs in various flagship programs, RTI, ST-SC atrocities act, domestic violence)	Year 1, Q1	No. of events	Event report/ Media clips
	No. of project staff trained with an enhanced knowledge on training topics	3 days residential training, one in year 1 and another in year 2	No. of trainings organised	Training reports
	Monitoring systems at the partner and Gram Sabha level developed (Staff, Gram Sabha standing committee level)	Year1 Q2, Q3, Q4 Year 2 Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Year 3 Q1 Q2, Q3	No. of review meetings organised	Meeting minutes register, report
	Staff capacitated on building communication and documentation at Gram Sabha level that would help them enhance capacity and skill for maintaining all registers and documents related to Gram Sabha.	Year 1 Q2	No. of staff trained and capacitated	Training report/ Participants list
	Systems of tracking the progress, indicators of change developed (MIS systems)	Year 1 Q4, Year 2 Q4, Year 3 Q3	No. of video documents prepared	Physical verification
	Increased responsiveness of local and state authorities	Year 1 H2 Year 2 H1, H2 Year 3 H1, H2	No. of half-yearly reports including success stories documented	Report document
	Baseline, concurrent monitoring and end line data on governance - PESA and JPRA in totality collected, collated and analyzed	Year1 Q1	ToR signed with the agency	ToR signed document
	Baseline, concurrent monitoring and end line framework design - tools, methodology developed.			

Coordination and programme impact	Team is trained on collection of data collection	Year 1 Qr 4	No. of orientation programme on data collection done	Training report, attendance register
	The agency develops systems for tabulation, analysis and report submission with key recommendation	Year 3 Q4	No. of workshops	Event report/ participants list
	Setting up state level advocacy committee with representation of eminent members having experiences on local governance agenda of the state	Year 1 Q3, Q4 Year 2 Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Year 3 Q1 Q2, Q3	No. of quarterly meetings organised and key decisions taken, No. of government notification in favour of PRI decentralization processes	Report and attendance register, government orders
	Learning, impact and successful approaches from the project are shared widely and to a range of stakeholders	Year 1, Year 2, Year 3	No. of stories and updates on website and No. of views	

Annexure II

Gram Sabha Standing Committees

As per Jharkhand Panchayati Raj Act (JPRA), 2001 the Gram Sabha to endorse its duties and responsibilities can establish 8 Standing Committees. These are committees on Village Development, Public Estates, Agriculture, Health, Village Protection, Basic

Structure, Education and Social Justice, and Vigilance. Salient features of the Standing Committees with respect to their functions, membership, tenure, formation, etc. are elaborated in table A2.

Table A2: Salient features of Gram Sabha Standing Committees

Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the department to support the thematic wing on behalf of Gram Sabha, • Keep a track record of the respective theme and suggest measures to the Gram Sabha, • Assist in VDP – thematic intervention, and • Follow-up on respective thematic decisions made by the Gram Sabha.
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four members (two male and two female) for each committee, • Each committee to appoint a chair (out of its four members), • Each committee to have a secretary nominated by the Gram Sabha President, and • There is no reservation for membership.
Tenure	One year from the date of formation
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special Gram Sabha meeting is called for selection of the Standing committee members, • Present members vote out for all the members of each committee, and • Members of one committee are not allowed to be a member of any other committee.
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meetings for regular affairs, • Venue, time and date to be decided by the chairman of the committee, • Notification about the meeting including agenda, venue details and time to be communicated among all members three days in advance, and • All functions of the standing committees to be documented in the designated registers of the committee. <p>Quorum of the meeting of the Standing Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of the members must be present for the meeting • If any scheduled meeting is cancelled due to lack of quorum, then the next meeting to be decided by the chairperson for which quorum is not required.

Table A3 illustrates the roles and responsibilities and the expected outcome of each of the eight standing committees of the Gram Sabha.

Table A3: Roles and Responsibilities and Expected Outcomes of the Gram Sabha Standing Committees

Committee	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Outcomes
Village Development Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look after the development work, • make plans for the village development and present it in front of the gram Sabha, and • select beneficiaries and give preference to/ prioritize the vulnerable families. 	coordinating for completion of participative VDP
Public Estates Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management of land, water, forest and other natural resources within the ambit of the village, and • management of drinking water for animals, bathing and washing areas for both people and animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequently checking the status and reports about the public estates, and • propose suggestions for outlays at Gram Sabha meetings (through proposals). <p>plan for VDP</p>

Committee	Roles and Responsibilities	Expected Outcomes
Agricultural Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look after agricultural related issues, irrigation facilities, fisheries, plantation, and • prepare the plan for the infertile land which can be beneficial for its people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate the farmers for irrigation, fertilizers, etc. • update about the agriculture-based schemes plan for VDP
Health Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management and cleanliness of the village, • look after the health issues, and help the community get access to vaccines for prevention and cure of various diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiate sanitation activities, • visiting health infrastructure and coordinating with service providers for better healthcare facility and improved health indicators, and Making the service providers accountable towards Gram Sabha.
Village Protection Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look after and take care of dowry prevention, protection from social evils, domestic violence, etc., • building consciousness among community members, unity and enhancement of harmony, and • take care of the property of gram Sabha. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to report to the community in case of any mis happening and provide immediate response, and • advocacy and promoting community policy framing to tackle social evils – alcoholism, dowry, domestic violence, etc.
Basic Structure Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversee the construction and restoration of wells, ponds, drinking water, etc., • look after the plantation and its surveillance, and look after the construction of roads, pools and other social buildings in the village and its surveillance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring minor repair and maintenance of village-based community infrastructure, • report and plan for major repairs and construction like electrification, road construction, hand pumps, etc., and • VDP planning
Education Committee and Social Justice Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look into the education system of primary, secondary and high schools and also look after the work related to cultural activities. • encourage ST, SC and other weaker sections of the community in the fields of education, socio-economic and cultural activities, and • protect women, children and other weaker sections from different forms of social evils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making service providers accountable towards Gram Sabha, • checking and keeping track of drop outs and counselling their family members, and • supervision of schools and status of MDM.
Vigilance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • look after the village plan program and also be more responsible towards better use of funds allotted for programs and also the surveillance of usage of fund, and • oversee the management of common public land, village sites and its development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementation of Gram Sabha decisions and VDPs through proper follow-ups and status updates, and • vigilance of the natural resources, agriculture, and other infrastructure in the village.

Annexure III

Project Implementation Team

Table A4: Project Implementation Team

	Position	Role
PHIA Foundation	Project Lead (1-M)	Overall management of GSA- planning, coordination with project partners, correspondence with donor, etc.
	Technical Support Officer (1-M)	Technical support to project teams, partnership development, convergence with line agencies (rights and entitlements-FRA, MGNREGA, pensions, etc.)
	MIS cum Documentation officer (1-M)	Reporting, documentation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Planning and Review with MIS system.
	BTC-Block Technical Coordinators (3-M)	Hand holding, Technical support at block level
Partner Organisations ASRA, LJK, Samvad, AROUSE	Chief Functionaries (4-M) Non staff position	Anchoring the field-based teams
	PC-Project Coordinators (4-M)	Manage, supervise and Reporting
	APC-Assistant Project Coordinators (6-5M, 1F)- ASRA and AROUSE had 2 APCs due to large geographies	Field Control and Supervision
	Panchayat Facilitator (39- 25 M, 14 F)-panchayat based	Manage and implement all the field level activities.
Community	Community Leaders (1080-approximately 30 percent Female)	Change Agents at Village/habitation level
	Traditional Heads/ Leaders (384-all male as per the traditional system)	Village head who facilitate the monthly Gram Sabha meetings, village planning, correspondence, campaigns, and capacitate the community on the importance of GS, its standing committees and different provisions of PESA, JPRA, etc.
	Gram Sabha Standing committee members (half to be female as per JPRA). 8 such committees were established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Development Committee • Public estates committee • Agriculture Committee • Health Committee • Village Protection Committee • Basic Structure Committee • Education Committee and Social Justice Committee • Vigilance Committee 	One of the core roles of these committees is to plan for VDP, hold relevant institutions accountable apart from taking up issues as per what is emphasized by its name

Partners



Society for Reformation and
Advancement of Adivasis (ASRA)
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Samvad
(www.samvad.net)



Lok Jagriti Kendra



AROUSE Society
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