Public Disclosure Authorized
Public Disclosure Authorized
Public Disclosure Authorized
Public Disclosure Authorized

South Asia Agriculture and Rural Growth Discussion Note Series
March 2020
1

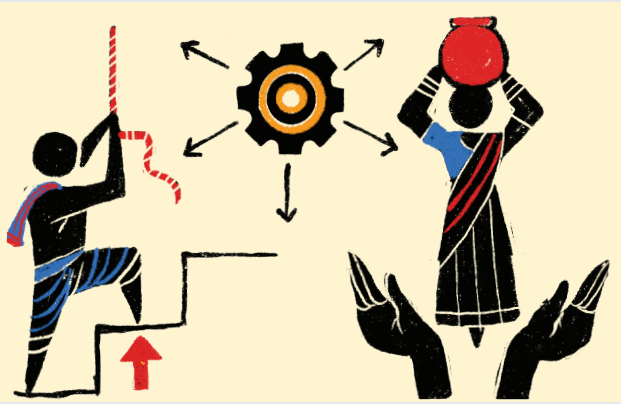
Social Inclusion:

Implementation, Outcomes and Key Learnings

Context

The Government of India (GoI) approved the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) in June 2011 to implement a renewed demand-driven strategy of rural poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods, based on universal social mobilization, building community -managed institutions of the poor, and universal financial inclusion.

The central objective of the NRLM is to "establish efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor that enable them to increase household (HH) incomes through livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial and public services". The overall approach is driven by the following core beliefs and assumptions about the rural poor:



1. The poor have a strong desire, and innate capabilities, to graduate out of poverty;

2. Local human and social capital - such as community resource persons (CRPs) and community leaders - are crucial in addressing poverty concerns;

3. Institutions of the poor are platforms for collective action and self-help, which increase their voice, space, and bargaining power;

4. External, dedicated and sensitive support structures play a crucial role in inducing and sustaining social mobilization, institution building and empowerment processes.

The mission has implemented a range of social inclusion strategies in the country, including Participatory Identification of the Poor (PIP), state specific poverty assessments, promotion of inclusive community institutions and community cadre, priority targeting and mobilzation of Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe (SC/ST) households, and vulnerability reduction measures such as the vulnerability reduction fund (VRF), health and food risk funds etc.

The mission prioritized the inclusion of the Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST), Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), single women and women headed families, landless and casual labor, elderly persons, person with disabilities (PwDs), minority groups, people living in remote geographies and in uncertain political environment.

Evolution of NRLM

As the program evolved, its focus expanded to include trafficked women, transgender persons, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PvTGs), Witch-hunt etc.

Following a cabinet decision in 2015, the mission decided to automatically include:

1. households included as per "inclusion" criteria of the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011); **1.65 million**)

3. households identified on the Participatory Identification of the Poor (PIP) list, as the target households for NRLM.

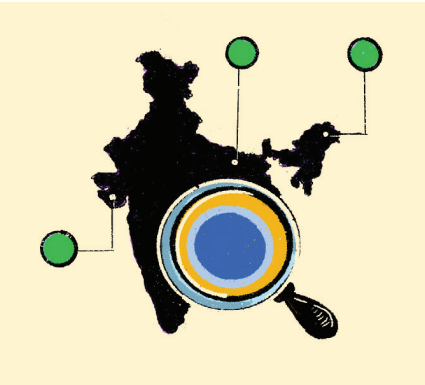
2. households with at least one "deprivation" criteria **(86.9 million)**

4. DAY-NRLM is also mandated to ensure 15% representation of women from minority groups.

Intervention: Inclusion strategies

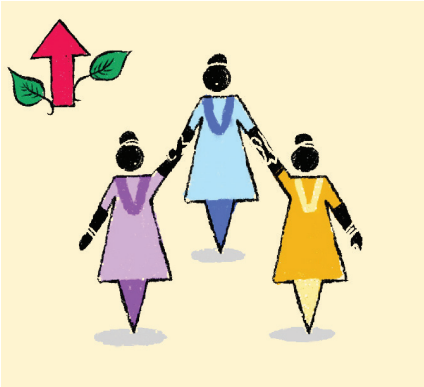
Prioritizing Poorest Geographies

The DAY-NRLM is mandated to reach out, mobilize and support over 90 million rural poor households across 600 districts, 6000 blocks, 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, in 6 lakh villages. The National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP) supported through World Bank funding, as a sub-project under the Mission, aimed to create a proof of concept for the DAY-NRLM. The NRLP was implemented in about 571 blocks across 161 districts in 13 low income states that account for over 85 percent of the rural poor in the country. The state rural livelihood missions (SRLMs) had applied pro-poor, inclusion criteria to select their first phase blocks based on higher concentration of poor and SC/ST households. A significant share of these prioritized blocks are expected to have a strong overlap with the GoI's Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme.

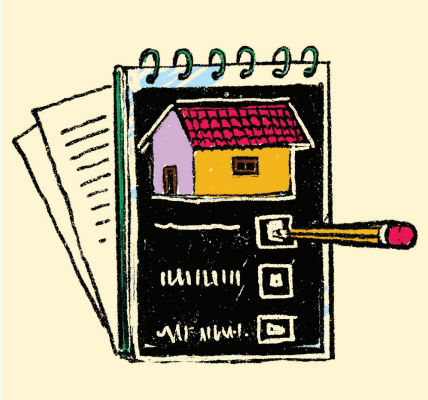


Participatory Identification of the Poor

To ensure that no poor family is left out, NRLM implemented multiple strategies for identification, inclusion and mobilization of target households. All rural poor households with at lease one deprivation, as listed by the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) conducted by MoRD, are the target households under DAY-NRLM. In addition, during village entry, social mobilizers would carry out participatory



rural assessment (PRA) exercises that included social maps, wealth and wellbeing ranking/grouping, vulnerability rankings, transect walks to poorest village hamlets etc. Through this process of participatory identification of the poor (PIP), a village list of different categories of poor and vulnerable households was prepared. The PIP would list the DAY-NRLM target households as poor or poorest of the poor (POP), as well as by social category. The list so prepared was endorsed by the Gram Panchayat and the household included in the list would also become the target households under DAY-NRLM. A specific advisory on the standard operating procedure on PIP was issued to the SRLMs, and State Missions were provided training in the PIP process.



Universal Social Mobilization

Mobilizing the poor to form their 'own institutions' is a hallmark of the NRLM. After identifying the PoP households, they are mobilized and organized into Self Help Groups (SHGs) based on affinity and proximity. At least one member from each household, usually a woman belonging to the poorest village areas, is initiated into the SHG network within a time frame of two years.

This process is spearheaded by external and internal community resource persons (CRPs) and social mobilizers. The SHGs are federated into Village Organizations (VOs) and the VO mobilizes further households. DAY-NRLM has also supported and co-opted pre-existing SHGs and SHG federations that accounted for 70 percent or more BPL households. The mission aims to ensure that 50 percent of the beneficiaries are SC/STs, 15 percent are minorities and 3 percent are persons with disability, while keeping in view the ultimate target of 100 percent coverage of identified rural poor families. Nearly 277,000 community professionals and CRPs (SHG members themselves) have been trained and are responsible for project implementation on the ground.

Promoting Socially Inclusive Institutions

NRLM places emphasis on building inclusive, participatory and accountable federations – a process intensive task that requires sensitivity and the active involvement of the community. Women from SC/ST and minority households are included in leadership roles within the SHGs, VOs, Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), Producer Groups (PGs) and Producer Organizations (POs). The Social Action Committee (SAC) of VOs and CLFs undertakes collective social action and promotes inclusion by preparing lists and coordinating visits to HHs left outside the purview of SHGs in order to enroll and offer them handholding support; as well as

to represent them at socio-political forums and inform them about various government entitlements and programs. NRLM support structures facilitate and nurture these institutions such that they become truly independent, self-managed and self-sustained over a period of time.

All State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) have deployed State Program Managers (SPM/PM) to anchor and support the key thematic programs of social inclusion, social development and convergence with other government line departments and programs. At the district level, these programs are managed by dedicated staff, while at the community level there are more than 16,000 CRPs viz., Yojana Sakhis, Setu Didis, Gender Point Persons, Poshan Sakhis who focus variously on nutrition, health and sanitation agendas with community.

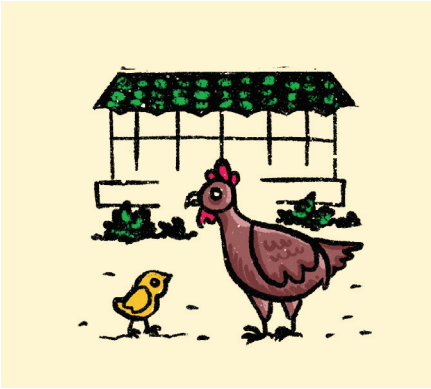
Inclusive Livelihood Models for the Poor

NRLM recognizes that the poor have multiple, seasonal, farm and non-farm livelihoods, and focuses on stabilizing and promoting their existing livelihoods portfolio, as well as diversifying them into more remunerative areas. The mission also fosters a vision of bringing all beneficiary farmland within the ambit of sustainable agriculture.

Certain key livelihood interventions (with a clear bias toward socially excluded communities and POP households) have focused on community-managed sustainable agriculture (CMSA), goateries, fisheries and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) based interventions. Several SRLMs have tailored focused interventions to suit ultra-poor HHs.

Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF)

A VRF has been provided to address the special needs of vulnerable SHG members



or destitute non-members in the village. VOs are empowered under the aegis of a Vulnerability Reduction Plan (VRP; a participatory bottom-up plan) to recognize and address food insecurity, health risk, sudden sickness/hospitalization, natural calamity, etc., faced by individual HHs or the community. These plans can also be aggregated at the Gram Panchayat/Cluster/Block level and converged with other departments.

It is well established in development literature that borrowing for emergency food and health expenditures in distress often leads to the dispossession of productive assets and loss of livelihoods among the poor. NRLM has supported the primary SHG federations to allocate dedicated resources to finance food and health expenditures, in addition to resources for livelihoods assets.

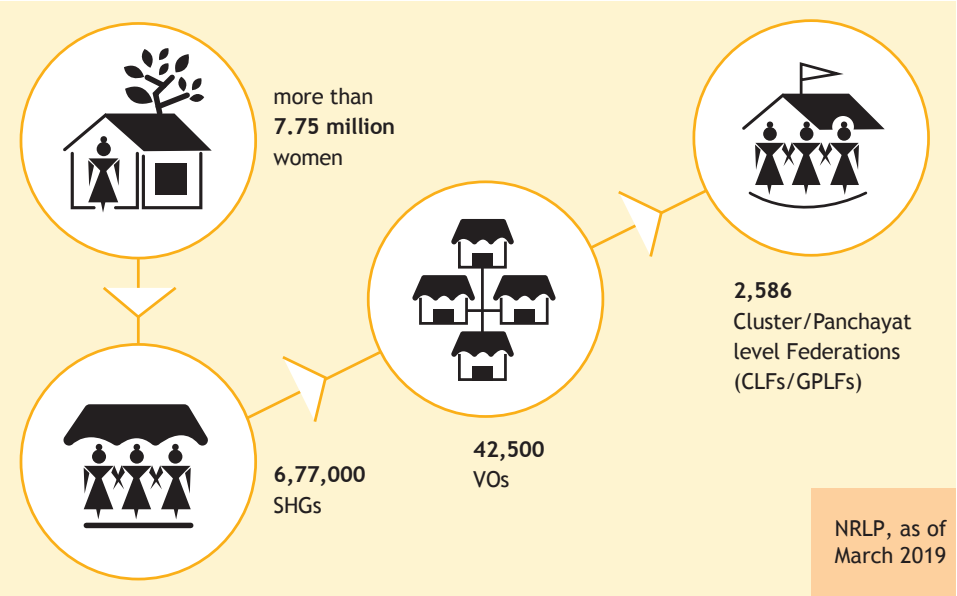
SHGs are empowered to coordinate and respond to exigencies by preparing and operationalizing micro-plans. Models such as financing food purchases from PDS and bulk purchases from the open market – which are distributed as in-kind loans – are tailored to address food security. SHG members are encouraged to contribute to separate 'Health Risk Funds' to meet health emergencies.

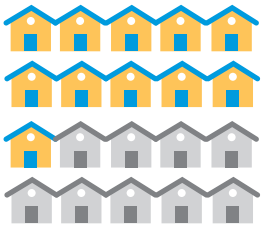
Access to services, safety nets and entitlements

Large government resources/entitlements such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), pensions, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), social insurance, health services, etc., are able to strengthen the household economy with additional incomes, savings on expenditure and increased consumption. The DAY-NRLM has actively leveraged the SHGs for reliable and efficient delivery of these services and entitlements.

Community institutions created under the ambit of the mission are mobilized to expand the coverage of micro-insurance services – particularly life, health and asset risks of the poor and vulnerable households. They have converged with insurance schemes launched by the GoI, such as the Prime Minister Sureksha Bima Yojana, Prime Minister Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Rashtriya Swasthya Yojana and agriculture and livestock insurance schemes.

Implementation/Achievements: Inclusion Outcomes





The program has effectively targeted some of the poorest households with more than 56 percent of the households mobilized into SHGs belong to SC/ST and minority households.

Under the aegis of the DAY-NRLM more than 67.9 million women have been mobilized into 6.14 million SHGs. In addition, 3,56,313 village organizations and 31,781 Cluster/ Panchayat Level Federations have been promoted.

Area Specific Interventions for Vulnerable Groups

Several special projects and pilots for SRLMs were engineered as proofs of concept in order to bring vulnerable and marginalized communities into the fold and universalize key lessons and insights. Some of the major pilot projects were designed to promote the social inclusion of victims of human trafficking, persons with disabilities (PwDs), the Lepcha in Darjeeling, West Bengal and PVTG communities in Attappadi, Kerala. Some experiences are enumerated below.

Attappadi Comprehensive Tribal and PVTG development special project

Against the backdrop of the high rate of infant mortality among tribal

communities in Kerala, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) approved the Attappady Comprehensive Tribal and PVTG development special project in 2014-2015. An overall allocation of INR 52.12 crore was made for seven years, wherein the first of two phases (April 2014 - March 2018) was allocated INR 30.19 crores. The project mobilized nearly 7,500 families among the Irula, Muduga and Kurumba tribal communities in Kerala and helped facilitate the formation of the four-tier PIPs to create self-sustaining community institutions. This special project was designed as a prototype for the DAY-NRLM, to be implemented across the country.

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

To ensure greater inclusion of persons with disabilities into the program, SRLMs have adopted a participatory vulnerability

assessment as an entry point activity to identify households with disabled members. The promotion of SHGs with exclusively differently-abled persons and their caregivers was prioritized. Organizing PwDs into groups has led to an increased awareness of - and access to- their rights and entitlements.

DAY-NRLM prioritized financial support in the form of a Revolving Fund (RF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) to these SHGs. The mission provided 50 percent more funds to these SHGs, as CIF. Tamil Nadu has led the way in vulnerability reduction and rehabilitation interventions for PwDs.

Lepcha Inclusion Project (Kingchoom Darmit Rural Livelihood Mission)

Lepchas, an indigenous tribal community residing in the mountainous terrain

of Kalimpong and Darjeeling district, West Bengal, are among the most marginalized communities in terms of access to government and social systems, basic infrastructure etc. This ensued a cascading effect on generations of Lepchas, culminating in low education, malnutrition, ill health, decline in livelihood base and loss of culture and language among the community. The aim of the Lepcha Inclusion Project was to build a vibrant, sustainable institutional structure with Lepcha women at the center of SHG based federations, in line with traditional structures of the community.

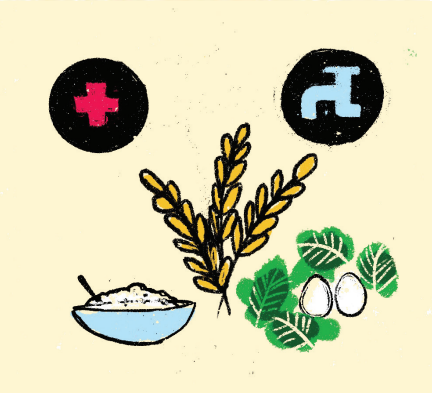
About 790 Deptong (SHGs) comprising 7,527 Lepcha women, have been federated into 295 Kyongs (VOs), 30 Thooms (CLFs) and 1 Poom (Central-Level Federation) named Mayel Lyang Deptong Mahila SHG Cooperative Society Ltd (CLF), which is registered under the Cooperative Societies Act.

Social Development

The convergence strategy adopted under the DAY-NRLM has successfully provided SHG members access to rights, entitlements and services of government schemes and programs. Thematic verticals like food, nutrition, health, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), education, local governance, social security, etc. were addressed under this strategy. Some examples are enumerated below.

Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW)

To reduce expenditure on medical care, increase economic productivity and improve the quality of life of rural women and their families, DAY-NRLM promoted necessary and appropriate Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene; altogether FNHW) interventions upfront. These interventions converged with the activities of the National Health Mission (NHM), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)



and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), and primarily focused on generating demand for their services. Significant strides have been made by women's SHGs in Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh to promote the usage of toilets. The mission promoted social and behavioural change practices centered on maternal and infant health and hygiene.

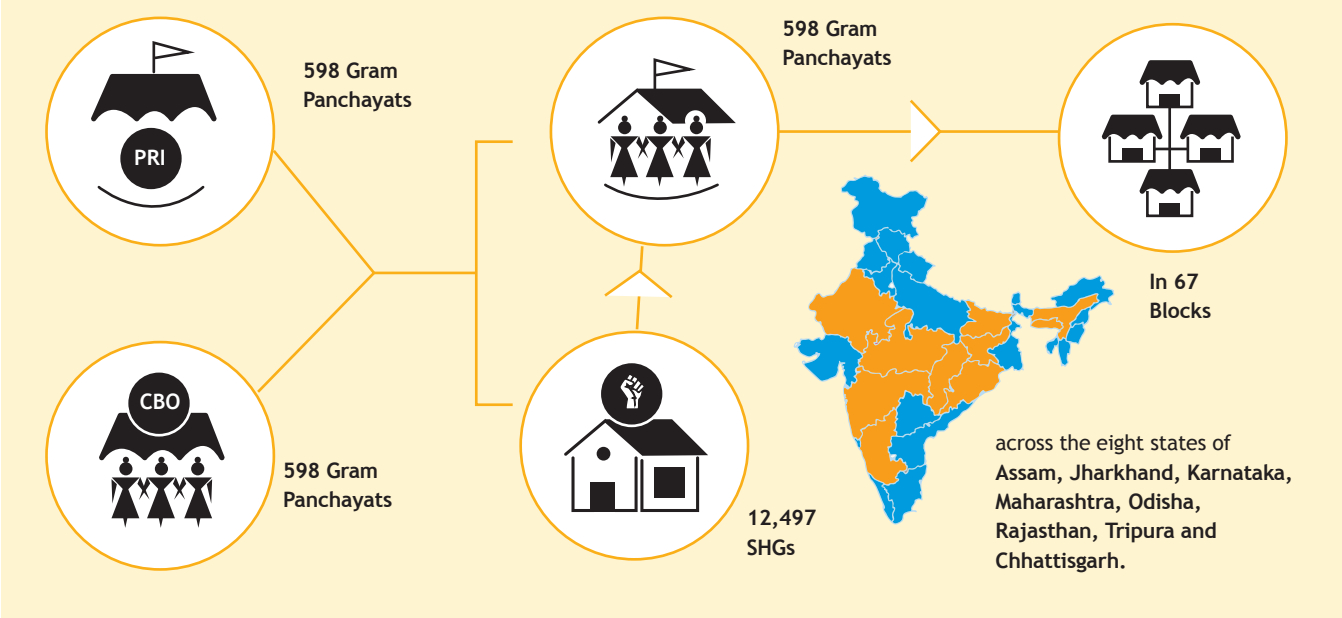
In 2017-18, an advisory on Dashasutri was issued by MoRD to all States, which mandated that SHGs and VOs were to address and discuss issues relating to health and nutrition at every meeting. A Master Circular on FNHW was issued to all States outlining the interventions and suggested modes of implementation. The intervention covered more than 600 blocks in 13 NRLP states.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala escalated the original interventions to address the health and nutrition needs of the elderly and the disabled persons, as well as focus on non-communicable diseases. They developed a pool of 23 National Resource Persons (NRPs) and 50 State Resource Persons (SRPs) to provide technical support to SRLMs, and developed capacity building modules for staff and community.

SWABHIMAAN

The SWABHIMAAN project was originally implemented in five tribal blocks across Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Bihar, in collaboration with UNICEF. Following a successful implementation of institutional systems to address maternal under-nutrition, after a period of three years the

PRI-CBO convergence: details of pilot projects



project completed a baseline study and commenced field level implementation in all DAY-NRLM villages.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) - Community Based Organizations (CBOs) Convergence Pilot Projects

DAY-NRLM promoted partnership and convergence between PRIs and CBOs so that each of the institutions may leverage the strengths of the other. The MoRD has supported the SRLMs to champion pilot projects on PRI-CBO convergence with the following objectives:

- Empower the poor to know, demand and access rights and entitlements,
- Include poor and vulnerable sections in local development process, and
- Make Gram Panchayats responsive and accountable by making them inclusive and increase participation in the Gram Sabha and working of the Panchayat.

Several capacity building measures have been initiated to mainstream convergence in general and Panchayat–Community based Organisations (CBOs) convergence in particular. The State Rural Livelihoods Mission of Kerala (Kudumbashree) has been designated the National Resource Organization (NRO) to support other SRLMs on PRI-CBO convergence.

PRI - CBO convergence pilot projects cover 12,497 SHGs in 598 Gram Panchayats in 67 blocks across the eight states of Assam, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tripura and Chhattisgarh.

Key Lessons and the Way Forward

Monitoring and Evaluation

While the Participatory Identification of the Poor (PRA/PIP) exercise found widespread acceptance among all stakeholders and successfully facilitated community engagement on issues of poverty and vulnerability, its execution and quality monitoring at scale has remained a challenge.

Social inclusion and saturation has unfolded in a phased manner

The social inclusion process under NRLM happened in three discernible phases.

The first phase was through the social mobilization drive of external CRPs, the second through VO leaders and community cadre (active women, social mobilizers, internal CRP) and the third phase through community leaders.

PoP households need more focused interventions, supported by dedicated teams

PoP households, comprising the bottom 10 percent, lack the basic assets and skills to participate in DAY-NRLM institutions, and suffer multiple deprivations and discrimination based on caste, gender and remoteness. It is a cause for concern if PoPs are not being served in an impactful way by the universal institutions of the poor. The mission needs to develop tailored, household-focused and differential strategies to lift this constituency out of poverty. Successful interventions in this regard have been led by the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. More robust learning, evidence and dissemination of information on economic mobility of the PoP households are required to develop state-specific, targeted interventions.

Sustainability

To ensure that these interventions continue to benefit the marginalized populations that they are meant to target, a concerted effort towards promoting community ownership is built into program design. By creating champions among program beneficiaries it is envisioned that successful interventions will be sustainable and replicable, while retaining the end goal of inclusivity at their core.

Systematic tracking of inclusion

The DAY-NRLM MIS has consistently tracked the proportion of SC and ST households among total SHGs, SHG membership, leadership, borrowers of CIF, and as beneficiaries of other livelihood support interventions. This cross-cutting and sustained tracking of inclusion is rare among government programs and has contributed significantly in the achievement of impressive social inclusion outcomes.

The scale and reach of DAY-NRLM's unique interventions designed to mobilize and include the most vulnerable sections of rural communities with women at the forefront, provides critical lessons for similar rural community development programs. As the program continues to mobilize excluded households, there is a need to expand the scale of existing social inclusion initiatives and facilitate access to other government rights and entitlements.

Building on these lessons and good practices, the next generation of rural livelihoods programs including the NRETP will work to graduate the livelihoods of the poor through inclusive groups including Producer Collectives. Finally, efforts need to be made to ingrain and sustain the progress made towards challenging restrictive cultural and gender norms.

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION NOTE SERIES

This note is part of the South Asia Agriculture and Rural Growth Discussion Note Series, that seeks to disseminate operational learnings and implementation experiences from World Bank financed rural, agriculture and food systems programs in South Asia.

Author(s): Varun Singh, P. Usha Rani

Series editors: Alreena Renita Pinto, Deepti Kakkar

Publication design & illustrations: Satwik Gade

We are grateful for the generous support from the Ministry of Rural Development, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Department for International Development, and various State Rural Development departments.

Disclaimer: The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this note are entirely those of the author(s) and should not be attributed in any manner to the World Bank, to its affiliated organizations or to members of its Board of Executive Directors or the countries they represent.