



Design for Impact



Creating Gender-Intentional Pathways in Rural India



Transform Rural India (TRI) is a development design practice focused on rural transformation. Our vision is to transform 100,000 most stranded villages in India into flourishing localities. TRI tackles challenges to rural development through its 'thoughtful tarrakki' approach, emphasizing local, sustainable development led by the community, with backing from government and markets.

The Gaping Challenge – Gender Gap!

Where does the world stand ?

134 Years

For women to achieve full equality with men globally.

169 Years

To close the political empowerment gap and ensure equal representation in leadership.

152 Years

To achieve workplace equality, including pay, participation, and leadership roles.

What's at Stake?

Closing gender gaps could boost global GDP by up to **20%**, proving equality isn't just fair—*it's economically transformative!*

Where Does India Stand?

129th

out of **146 countries**

5th

in South Asia lagging behind Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

Breaking Down the Gaps

142nd

Economic Participation

Women's workforce participation is just 45.9%, compared to men at 78.5%. A stark income gap and limited representation in senior roles hold women back.

65th

Political Empowerment

Ranked high in head-of-state indicator (40.7%), but women hold only 9.1% of ministerial roles and 13.6% of parliamentary seats.

112th

Educational Attainment

Despite high enrolment, a 17.2% literacy gap remains, revealing the need for stronger educational efforts.

142nd

Health and Survival

Near the bottom, reflecting inequalities in life expectancy and health access driven by cultural and economic factors.

India's Rural Women: The Gaps We Need to Close

Economic Disparities

Wage Gap

35.34%

Labour Force Participation

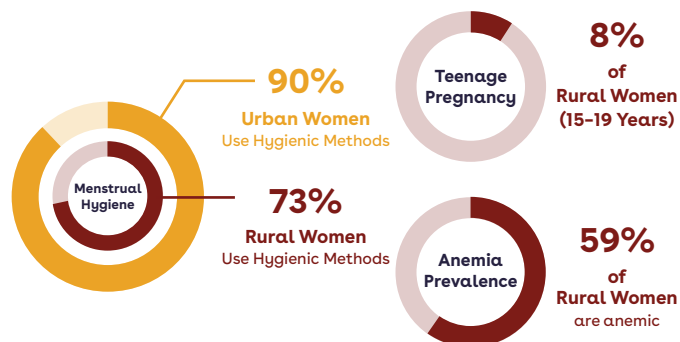
Women: 37%

Men: 78.5%

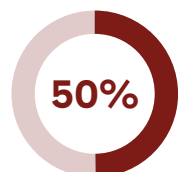
Agriculture Reliance

61% of rural women work in agriculture

Health Challenges

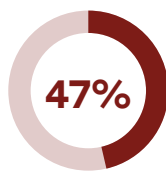


Digital Divide



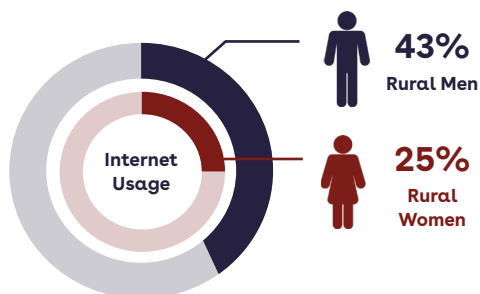
Media Access

50% of rural women
lack exposure



Mobile Ownership

Only 47% of rural women
own mobile phones



Education Divide

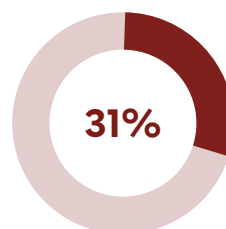
16.5%

Literacy Gap
(Men vs. Women)

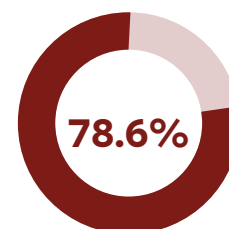
27%

No Schooling
(Rural women)

Gender Based Violence

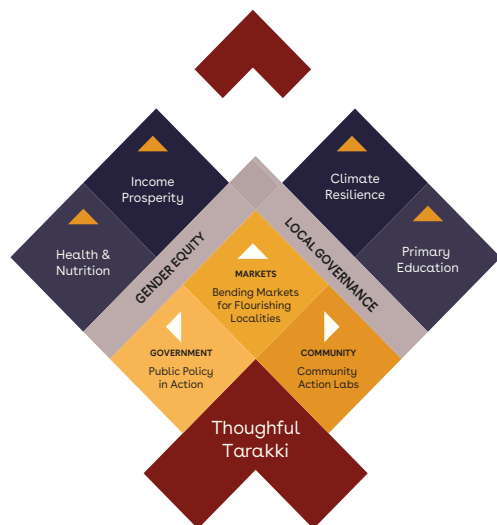


Physical Violence
Experienced by 31% of
rural women



Unreported Cases
78.6% never speak out

TRI's Approach



Intergenerational poverty is a multifaceted problem that needs a multidimensional solution. Our transformative Thoughtful Tarakki™ approach emphasizes empowerment, inclusivity, and local capacity-building to address the multifaceted challenges faced by marginalized populations.

We put this approach into action with our TRI-focal strategy of engaging samaj, sarkar and bazar. We start by working with communities to find out what they want, designing whole-of-society solutions, piloting them in our Community Action Labs (CAL), embedding our Public Policy in Action (PPIA) staff within the government to scale-up the successful initiatives and helping connect people with the marketplace to build sustainable livelihoods and supply chains.

This framework of engagement is built on:

- Community control and ownership
- Responsive public system
- Engaged markets



Locality Compacts

Collaboration between community institutions, local governance structures, and frontline public service delivery architecture, bringing together complementary competencies and linkages across Bazaar, Samaaj Sarkaar (BSS)

01

02

Public System

Engaging with and creating a responsive **Public System**

Market Players

Attracting **Market Players** to Co-locate and provide goods and services, ensuring fair participation of rural households in larger markets and attracting investment into the rural economy.

03

TRI-focal Solutions

Gender as the Core

TRI firmly believes that gender equality and equity are essential to improving the quality of life for women. Achieving economic, social, and political empowerment is non-negotiable. With this commitment, TRI embeds gender sensitivity and responsiveness into its programs and organizational practices through its framework, policies, attitudes, and behaviors.

By integrating gender equity across sectors such as health, education, governance, and economic initiatives, TRI addresses the interconnectedness of gender with poverty and social exclusion.

The Change Vector (Badlav Didi) Model

At the heart of TRI's approach is the 'Change Vector' Model, which trains and supports women leaders—known as Badlav Didis—in every village.

These women:

- Work as catalysts for change in their communities.
- Address critical issues related to health, education, livelihoods, and governance.
- Drive behavioral and structural transformation by challenging gender norms and spreading awareness on topics of personal and community interest.

Impact

To date, over 4,000 Badlav Didis have brought about significant changes in their communities, fostering a shift toward equality and inclusivity.

The TRI-Focal Gender-Inclusive Approach

TRI's TRI-focal strategy emphasizes building gender-inclusive ecosystems across three domains:

1

Communities

Create **gender-sensitive and inclusive societies** that promote equity in daily life and decision-making thereby enhancing the individual and collective agency of women.

2

Governance

Collaborate with governments to establish **gender-responsive governance frameworks** that prioritize inclusivity and address gender disparities.

3

Private Sector

Empower rural women with skills and opportunities for entrepreneurship and jobs while promoting gender-sensitive practices in employment, credit, and marketing.

This holistic approach ensures that rural women achieve financial independence while creating ripple effects of systemic and sustainable change.

Theory of Change

Context

Women's social and economic empowerment achieved considerable focus through flagship programs like NRLM, MGNREGA

Social and financial inclusion achieved

Access to credit and livelihoods enhanced

Control over income and access to assets is a challenge

Gender-intentional issues like malnourishment, lack of access to education, and domestic violence impede quality of life

Decision-making within households and interface with public systems to be achieved

Key Levers

Embedding gender in TRI's framework, vision and programmes

Internalisation of gender through capacity building processes

Strong institutions enhancing collective agency

Individual agency enhancement with increased access and control over income, productive assets, resources

Interface with public systems to reduce gap in public system delivery

Outputs

- Gender integration across thematic areas
- Gender embedded in behaviour, language and communication within organisation
- Enhanced individual and collective agency
- Capacity building and redressal of gender intentional issues
- Convergence in between federations, PRIs and departments for effective delivery

Outcome

- Gender equality and equity goals enhanced through strengthened SHG-federations interface with public systems
- Indicated by - Gender integration across themes to enhance social, economic and political empowerment
- SHG federations addressing gender intentional issues in convergence
- Federations undertake gender planning and budgeting
- Individual agency enhanced through access and control over income, productive assets and resources by women

Impact

Social, economic and political empowerment of women through SHG federations and its interface with PR and public systems.

Impact in Numbers

Community Reach and Impact



Geographic Outreach

Population Impacted

Leadership & Advocacy Development



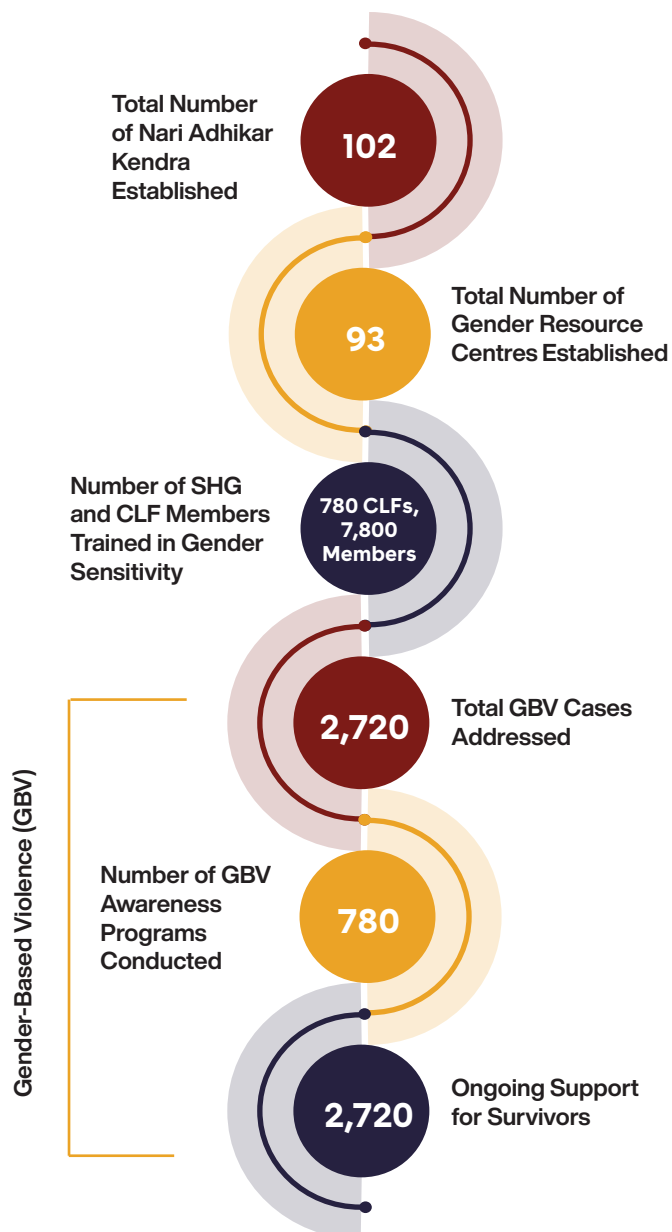
Women Elected Representatives (EWRs)

Total Number of EWR Trained in Gender-Sensitive Governance

Economic Empowerment & Entrepreneurship



Community Empowerment & Institutional Capacity



The Solutions

1

Communities

TRI strengthens rural women's participation by empowering community institutions like SHGs and CLFs and creating gender-sensitive spaces for decision-making. Women are trained in gender equity to challenge traditional roles and actively engage in governance. Key interventions include:

◆ Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equity:

- **Nari Adhikar Kendras (NAKs):** Managed by CLFs, NAKs connect families to entitlements, livelihood opportunities, and GBV referral services. Established in 124 CLFs across 102 blocks in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Gender Resource Centres (GRCs):** Under NRLM, GRCs address child marriages, education retention, and GBV while serving as hubs for women's rights and Chhattisgarh (19 GRCs established) Assam

◆ Capacity Building:

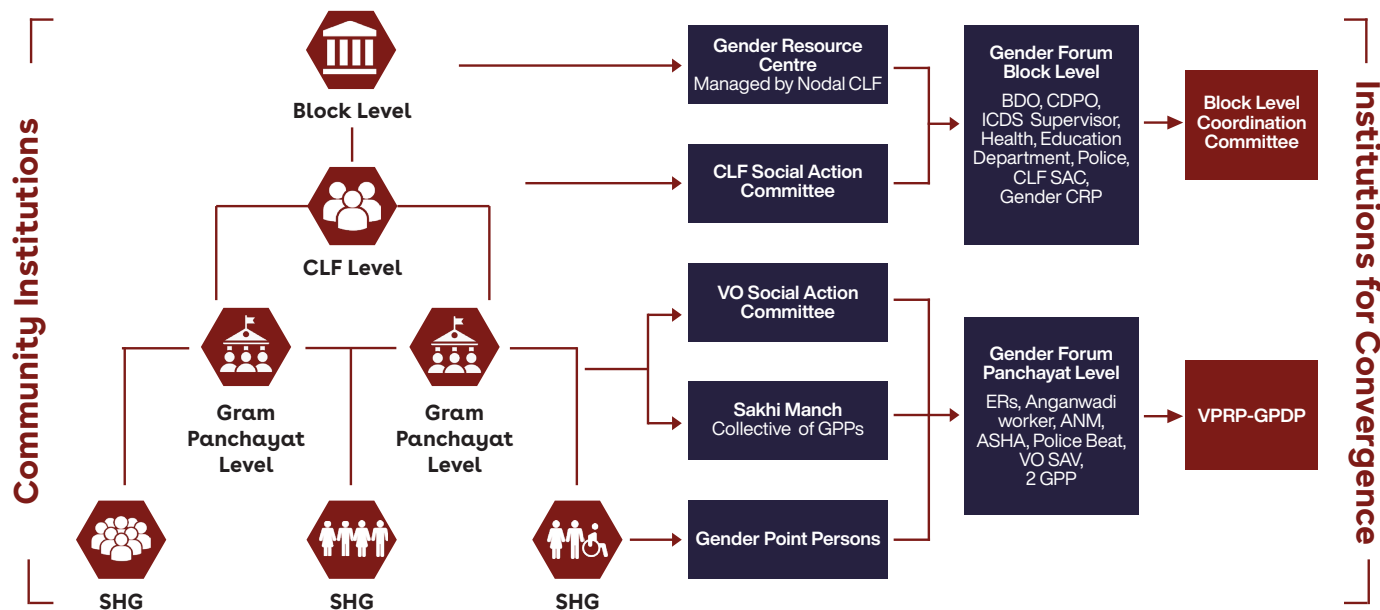
Targeted training for CLF leaders, Village Organisation office bearers, SHGs, and Gender Forums on addressing gender disparities and community governance.

◆ Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Support:

Through NAKs and GRCs, TRI provides counseling, legal aid, and awareness programs for GBV survivors while collaborating with stakeholders like Panchayats, police, and legal systems to ensure ongoing support and prevention.

CLF managed GRCs are supported in creating social pressure against violation of rights, engage in referrals to police, legal services authority, and one-stop centre gained through joint advisories in between State Rural Livelihood Missions and above-mentioned departments.

Implementation Framework



CASE BOX 1

Punita's Fight for Freedom: A Story of Betrayal, Courage, and Community Support

Punita (name changed), a young woman from Lakhipur block in Sarguja, had endured a lifetime of struggles in just a few short years. After a failed marriage that left her divorced and ostracized, her family arranged a second marriage to secure her future. Her new husband, much older, lived in a village in Korba district with two grown children from a previous marriage. Punita tried to settle into her new life and found a glimmer of hope when she gave birth to a daughter, believing this marriage might finally bring her some stability.

Her hopes were shattered when she discovered a horrifying secret. Her husband and stepson were plotting to sell her to a pimp, and they had already taken an advance payment. The sale was planned for New Year's Day. Terrified and betrayed, Punita confided in her sister, Sunita, who worked as a cadre member for the Gender Resource Centre (GRC). Speaking cautiously over the phone, Punita pleaded for help, knowing her husband was growing suspicious and monitoring her every move.

Sunita wasted no time. Alarmed by the gravity of the situation, she approached the GRC in Pali. The team quickly convened and decided to act, involving local cadres and the Cluster Level Federation's Social Action Committee. A complaint was lodged with the police in Pali, and a team was sent to Punita's village. However, when the police arrived, they were met with resistance. Her husband, with the backing of local leaders, denied the allegations and pressured the police into leaving.

Undeterred, the GRC team escalated the matter to senior police officials in Korba. Their persistence paid off, and the next day, a larger police force accompanied the GRC members to Punita's village. This time, resistance was futile. Her husband created a scene, denying any wrongdoing and even threatening to harm himself. Despite these theatrics and attempts by an influential local leader to intervene, the police stood firm. Punita was finally rescued and taken to her mother's home, a safe haven away from the turmoil.

For the first time in months, Punita felt a semblance of safety. However, her ordeal wasn't over. From a distance, her husband continued to issue threats, vowing retaliation. The police quickly put an end to this, warning him of severe consequences if he persisted.

Over the following months, Punita began rebuilding her life. Meanwhile, her husband, perhaps realizing the gravity of his actions, began reaching out with apologies. He sent letters expressing remorse and pledging to change. At first, Punita was resolute in her refusal to return. But after careful discussions with the GRC and her family, she agreed to reconcile, provided her husband sought counseling.

Under the guidance of a One-Stop Center, he attended sessions to address his abusive tendencies. Slowly, meaningful changes became evident in his behavior. After observing his efforts and sincerity, Punita made the cautious decision to reunite with him, determined to give their relationship another chance for the sake of their daughter.

Today, Punita lives with her husband and daughter in a more peaceful environment. Her journey, marked by courage and resilience, underscores the transformative power of timely intervention and community support. Thanks to the unwavering efforts of the GRC, the police, and her own determination, Punita not only escaped a life-threatening situation but also paved the way for a new beginning.



In Focus

Nari Adhikar Kendra (NAK) – A Community-Based Institution for Resolving Gender-Based Violence and Rights Violations

Nari Adhikar Kendra (NAK) serves as a pivotal community-based institution aimed at addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and violations of rights, particularly for women and children. Managed by the Cluster Level Federation (CLF), it operates both physically and virtually, offering an accessible space for women to seek help, protection, and justice.

Key Objectives

- 1. Convergence for Enhanced Access:** NAK aims to link critical rural development schemes to improve women's access to entitlements, social security, and skill development, enhancing opportunities for income generation and asset ownership.
- 2. Support Networks for GBV Victims:** NAK facilitates preventive, protective, and rehabilitative services, creating strong networks for survivors of GBV and connecting them to livelihood options.
- 3. Empowerment Through Community Ownership:** Managed by the CLF, the centre ensures that community institutions play a central role in addressing gender-based issues, while also fostering local ownership and sustainability.



Strategic Partnerships: NAK strengthens its impact through collaboration with government institutions at both the village and block levels, including Panchayats, Women and Child Development (WCD), police, and legal services authorities. These partnerships help ensure that women and children facing violence receive comprehensive support and services.

Impact: The centre has effectively bridged gaps in accessing services, where TRI provides technical assistance to build institutional mechanisms and support capacity building. NAK focuses on a gender-transformational approach, enabling Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations to raise awareness, articulate gender issues, and advocate for better grievance redressal systems.

Capacity Building for Sustainability: NAK is equipped with intensive training programs for community-based organizations to help them engage with local institutions like Panchayats and frontline workers (Anganwadi Workers, ASHAs, police, etc.). These initiatives empower cadres to manage NAK operations effectively, ensuring a sustained, responsive system for addressing gender-based issues.

Nari Adhikar Kendra is a key example of how community-driven solutions, in collaboration with government bodies, can create an accessible, effective platform for addressing gender inequality and violence. By empowering local institutions and fostering cross-sector collaboration, NAK plays a crucial role in advancing gender equity and justice at the grassroots level.

2

Government Support

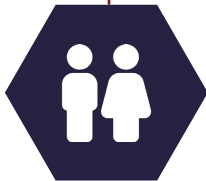
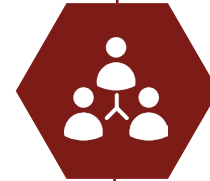


■ Support to Institutional Mechanisms

Capacity-building programs strengthen institutions like Village Organization Social Action Committees, Cluster Level Federation Social Action Committees, Gender Forums, and Gender Resource Centres (GRCs) to address gender-based violence and violations, enabling them to actively protect and support women in communities. Capacity building includes sessions on gender and patriarchy, gender division of labour, access and control over resources and institutions, gender based violence, gender and decentralisation.

■ Interdepartmental Interventions

NAKs provide capacity-building programs for community organizations to engage with panchayats, frontline workers, and block-level departments, equipping cadres to manage NAKs and support sustainable interventions.



■ Gender in Decentralized Governance

TRI trains Women Elected Representatives (EWRs) in gender concepts, decentralization, and rural planning, enhancing leadership and integrating gender-sensitive policies into Panchayat governance.

CASE BOX 2

Gender-Sensitive Panchayats – A Transformative Initiative in Madhya Pradesh

In Madhya Pradesh, a groundbreaking initiative is underway to create gender-sensitive governance in 70-80 panchayats, empowering women, enhancing social inclusion, and improving access to essential services. By integrating a gender lens into grassroots governance, the initiative fosters inclusive development and sustainable change. The program focuses on social inclusion, financial inclusion, education, malnutrition prevention, and access to social security, aiming to strengthen women's participation in decision-making and governance. Baseline data was collected on key indicators, including women's involvement in SHGs, access to financial services, school dropout rates, malnutrition prevention efforts, and reach of social security schemes. The initiative involved multiple steps, starting with baseline data collection in partnership with local panchayats, followed by state-level consultations to ensure multisectoral collaboration. Women sarpanches underwent structured training to enhance leadership skills, while village organizations and cluster-level federations received orientation on gender-sensitive governance. Frontline workers, including school principals, Anganwadi workers, and ASHAs, were engaged to address children's education, malnutrition, and health access for women and children.

The initiative has led to tangible improvements, with strengthened gender perspectives in governance, enhanced social services, and increased financial inclusion for marginalized groups. Gender-equitable governance has contributed to sustainable development, ensuring better resource allocation and targeted interventions. However, challenges such as resistance to change, capacity constraints among women sarpanches, and complex interdepartmental coordination emerged. Overcoming these required extensive capacity building, continuous mentorship, and engaging male allies to create a supportive ecosystem. Lessons from the initiative emphasize the importance of community buy-in, sustained training, and a multisectoral approach for long-term impact. The success of this initiative presents a scalable model, with potential replication across other states through policy advocacy, dedicated funding, and partnerships with civil society. Institutionalizing gender-sensitive governance and strengthening grassroots institutions can lead to more inclusive and participatory rural development. By fostering women's leadership and ensuring systematic support, this initiative sets a precedent for gender-equitable governance models that can be expanded nationwide.



3

Private Sector Engagement

TRIF promotes gender-inclusive entrepreneurship by equipping women with training, resources, and financial support to help them succeed in business. A structured approach is followed to identify and support women entrepreneurs, ensuring a gender-integrated learning experience.

1. Capacity Building and Training

Under the Accelerated Entrepreneurship Development Programme (AEDP), gender-sensitive training equips CLF members, cadres, and staff with skills to access resources, improve mobility, manage time, and reduce drudgery. Women selected for AEDP undergo a blended training approach, combining conceptual clarity on gender, entrepreneurship knowledge, and essential business skills.

2. Customized Support

Women entrepreneurs are identified through structured templates that assess their time use, involvement in sustenance and care work, access to credit, raw materials, and markets, as well as their aspirations. They receive family counseling and guidance in developing actionable business plans.

3. Financial Access

Women are linked to financial institutions and Mudra loans, enhancing their financial literacy and access to capital.

4. Motivational and Cross-Learning

Virtual motivational sessions and exposure visits to successful models like Kudumbashree, SEWA, Udyogini, and AKRSP inspire resilience and innovation. Several inspiring entrepreneurship case studies from across the country have been integrated into the curriculum.

5. Phygital Learning Approach

Sessions are conducted in a hybrid format, where women entrepreneurs join physically from resource hubs while engaging with expert resource persons virtually, ensuring wider access to knowledge and mentorship.



The initiative follows a step-by-step approach; training CLF HR and women entrepreneurs on the gender-integrated AEDP curriculum, supporting them in business plan development, providing family counseling, and ensuring mentorship support.

CASE BOX 3

The Tappal Samriddhi Mahila Kisan Producer Company Limited (FPO), established on 26th August 2022 in Tappal, Aligarh, serves as a model for women-led economic empowerment in agriculture. Operating in a traditionally male-dominated sector, this initiative has successfully enhanced women's participation in agribusiness, improved access to resources, and established sustainable market linkages.

Led by a determined group of women—Jugendri, Suman, Raman, Gudiya Devi, and Rajesh Devi—the journey of the FPO has been nothing short of transformational. Since officially becoming operational on 1st August 2023, the FPO has registered 1,000 women shareholders, each gaining a direct stake in agricultural decision-making. With a turnover of ₹50.5 lakh within the first year, the initiative has demonstrated not only financial viability but also the untapped potential of women-led agricultural enterprises.

Beyond financial achievements, the FPO has taken proactive steps to establish a strong foundation for sustainable growth. Compliance with essential regulatory requirements—including seed, fertilizer, pesticide, MSME, and FSSAI licenses—has enabled the organization to operate with credibility and expand its reach. Through well-developed supply chain linkages, the FPO ensures access to quality inputs such as fertilizers and seeds while creating direct market connections for wheat, mustard, and potatoes.

A key focus area has been skill development and knowledge dissemination. Women farmers have been trained in crop diversification, pest control, and sustainable farming practices. Demonstration farms showcasing iron bio-fortified millet and trellis farming have led to increased yields and improved income.

Additionally, collaborations with Krishi Sakhi, Aajeevika Sakhi, and Agri Entrepreneurs have facilitated ongoing learning and technological adoption among farmers.

One of the most impactful innovations has been the establishment of Digital Milk Collection Centers, operated by women (Sanchalika Didis). These centers not only ensure fair pricing but also enhance transparency in transactions. Partnerships with AMUL, Mother Dairy, and Oi Milk Gramin Pvt Ltd have provided reliable market access, contributing to ₹40 lakh in revenue. Farmers are now able to negotiate better prices and reinvest earnings into improving agricultural productivity.

Looking ahead, the FPO has ambitious plans for expansion. Over the next six months, it aims to double its membership to 2,000 women farmers, extend its Milk Collection Centers to new villages, and establish a steam plant for value-added dairy products such as Khoya, Paneer, and Ghee. Additionally, plans are underway to launch a Mustard Oil Mill with a production capacity of 400 liters per eight-hour shift, complete with FSSAI certification and branding. To further support smallholder farmers, the FPO intends to apply for a Farm Machinery Bank under government initiatives, enabling affordable access to modern equipment.

The story of Tappal Samriddhi Mahila Kisan FPO is not just about economic growth—it is about empowerment, agency, and resilience. By breaking long-standing barriers, these women are shaping a new narrative for rural agriculture—one that prioritizes inclusivity, sustainability, and shared prosperity. With continued investment and support, this FPO has the potential to serve as a replicable model for women-led agricultural enterprises across India.



The bottom 100,000 villages of India are home to the world's largest concentration of people living in multidimensional poverty – "the stranded India."

TRI design solutions for "Stranded India"



Income Prosperity



Health & Nutrition



Primary Education



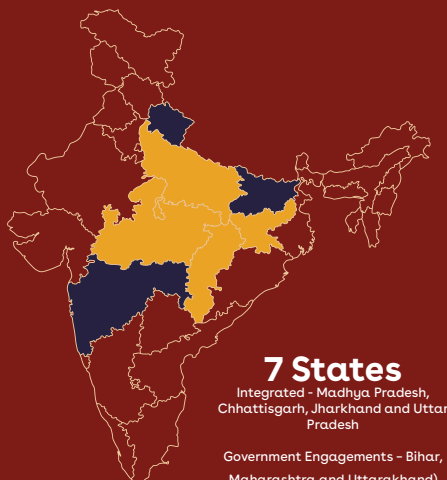
Climate Change



Gender & Inclusion



Governance



2,83,384
Households Reached



20,399
Villages



80,675
Intervention HHs with income
more than 100,000 INR



60+
Government Formal
Engagements for Public
Policy in Action



32 Blocks
with teams to support
Community Action Labs
in 32 Districts

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