

# BAREFOOT LAWYERS PROJECT

Nuapada District, Odisha, India  
01.07.2015 – 30.06.2018

## *Self- Evaluation Report*



LOTTERY FUNDED

LOGO of CHALE CHALO



IVDT

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## **A. Executive Summary**

The “Barefoot Lawyers Project” (BLP) was implemented by Chale Chalo (India project partner) in collaboration with Integrated Village Development Trust (IVDT, the UK project partner) from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018. Supported by the Big Lottery Fund UK under its International Communities Programme, the aim of this initiative was to achieve legal literacy among 9284 SC/ST women in 98 villages/hamlets in Nuapada district, Odisha, India. As the BLP Follow-up, it was further extended for six months to 31 December 2018. The total grant awarded for the project (for 36 + 06 months) was £197,680, out of which £178,759 was used by India partner.

The **aim** of the project was to achieve legal empowerment of SC/ST women, enabling them to protect their rights, and access justice, poverty reduction programmes and basic services, increasing their control over their lives.

The BAREFOOT LAWYERS Project substantially contributed to the legal empowerment of marginalised women by increasing their ability to access information, free legal services, poverty reduction programs and basic services, and by improving accountability. 208 Barefoot Lawyers (BLs) and 211 Community Justice Mentors (CJMs), recruited from within communities, were trained and engaged for legal education and advocacy for addressing rights and justice denial cases. 98 Dalit and Adivasi Women’s Forums (DAWFs) were established and used as a safe and sustained framework by these disadvantaged women to build their skills and confidence to take action in the public arena. They have been working together - planning, taking action, learning, sharing and using pro-poor and pro-women laws and schemes for their benefits. Interface and sensitisation programs with duty-bearers, elected representatives, media, and CSOs has increased their commitment and support for SC/ST women, helping them address their problems, deliver women-friendly justice, rights and services, and implement pro-poor laws, schemes and programs.

The achievements have contributed to proper access to rights, gender and caste justice, poverty reduction and improvement of basic services among 9284 SC/ST women. In addition, the families (approx. 32,000 people) of these women and others (approx. 150,000 plus) across their communities have benefited from their gains. These women have continued to make their voice heard and participated in public decision-making beyond project period. The project effectively has set a positive trend to address the entrenched caste and gender-based discrimination issues at micro-level through legal empowerment of SC/ST women which directly challenged the male- and higher caste-dominated justice, rights and service delivery system, and created ample space for women’s participation and ownership to address their issues.

The key project actions were completed within the time-frame since the project created scope for direct involvement and ownership of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The follow-up actions have given opportunity to further strengthen the women’s forums and federations, and their linkages, to assess the impacts, capture the learning, and adopt realistic strategies for sustaining, replicating and multiplying the project works. The success can be attributed to project design, timing of mobilising and empowering excluded SC/ST women and raising issues, effective project team, ownership of project by beneficiaries, managing all aspects of the project in letter and spirit, addressing assumed risks and emerging challenges, the support of the Big Lottery & IVDT, maintaining flexibility as necessary, and integrating monitoring, assessment, learning and corrective measures.

## **B.1. Project Background**

The original idea for the project grew out of existing CHALE CHALO work, and had been developed collectively with the support of beneficiaries and other potential stakeholders. All of them have been successful in delivering the project outcomes with total commitment. The partnership between IVDT, Chale Chalo, beneficiaries, local communities and other stakeholders has been very strong and effective, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities based on the particular strengths of each; it is this that ensured the miracle of achieving the desired outcomes of the project. The timing for legal awareness on most relevant laws and raising the issues was also perfect. It was felt that twenty years earlier communities (and government institutions) would not have been ready for this kind of change, and in twenty years' time we hope it might not be so necessary.

The project was implemented in 98 predominantly SC/ST communities in remote backward villages and hamlets in 3 blocks (Sinapali, Boden & Khariar) of Nuapada District, Odisha, India. Nuapada District is within the KBK region (undivided Kalahandi, Bolangri and Koraput district). It is an area that has been infamous for droughts, extreme poverty, hunger, starvation, child selling and violation of human rights over a long period. Nuapada has been declared as a "drought-prone" and "disturbed" area by the government from time to time.

Despite being illegal, the caste system flourishes, and members of SC/STs continue to suffer from 'untouchability', socio-economic exclusion, abuse and discrimination. This is generally the case Nuapada District and the 98 project villages/hamlets in particular, where approximately 15% of people are SC and 43% are ST (Census Report 2011). Poverty is especially marked in Nuapada District with around 80% covered under NFSA ration cards in project villages. Acute poverty has led to high levels of distress and seasonal migration. There had been no sign of sustained reduction of poverty among SC/ST families, due largely to discrimination and denial of rights and entitlements. Persistent inequalities have resulted in inadequate access to the justice system, resources and basic services for vulnerable groups, especially women. Low literacy among SC/ST women adds to their vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and denial of basic rights, in their families, at work, and in the governance and justice systems. The women of these communities bear the brunt of their families' poverty.

Genuinely left-over poor families had no confidence to claim and access food security and poverty reduction schemes. MGNREGS, and other employment-generation schemes suffered from delayed payments, corruption, and poor implementation. SC/ST women had little or no knowledge of or access to many of their basic rights, little institutional support to take recourse to legal and/or administrative remedy, and had little say in decision-making. The formal justice system was inaccessible, expensive and long-winded. Complainants had to use brokers who block access to information. Women were invisible to traditional caste panchayats and to duty-bearers and thus had no opportunity or support to make their voice heard. Legal aid schemes were unknown to them and rarely available. Justice seekers had limited hold over duty-bearers, who did not fulfil their legal obligations.

Though conditions in the KBK region continue to lag far behind the rest of the country, things are slowly beginning to change due to greater efforts on the part of the government as well as to the project. For example, most villages now have schools, with almost 100% enrolment, and girls are getting a chance of education. Cases of hunger have been much reduced, especially during last 3 years, due to the sustained collective demands and claims by marginalised women, and the improved implementation of NFSA, MDM, ICDS, pensions and other schemes. Similarly, the benefits of housing, land right records, housing, employment and other social welfare schemes have started reaching the genuine poor beneficiaries with a much improved service delivery and continuous reduction of bribe cases in project villages and beyond over the past couple of years.

## **B.2. Targeted Beneficiaries and Stakeholders:**

The project was intended to cover 9000 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women as direct beneficiaries (2,500 SC, 6,500 ST). In addition, the families (30,994 people) of these women have benefited from their gains, as have others indirectly (26,000) in the project villages and beyond. 24 staff and volunteers of Chale Chalo, 180 Community Justice Mentors (120f, 60m), 180 Barefoot Lawyers (120f, 60m), 360 SC/ST women leaders as peer legal education and 360 SC/ST women leaders as advocacy facilitators, 54 CSO members (22f, 32m), 360 Justice Providers/Program Implementers/Service Providers (167f, 193m), 226 elected representatives (113f, 113m) were involved as other key stakeholders in the project. BLP was mainly SC/ST women-focussed. Government officials, duty-bearers, law organisations, media, PRIs, formal/informal justice providers, rights activists, legal practitioners, local artists, experts, CBOs and other NGOs, all had an important role to play, and were included in the project cycle in a range of ways.

The ethnic background of direct beneficiaries is 100% Indian, with 100% belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, and 100% are Hindus. The project comprised 98% female and 2% males, these last due to coverage of CSOs, justice and service providers, program implementers and other stakeholders. The project supported exclusively SC/ST adult women for their legal empowerment; all direct beneficiaries are 18+, mostly below 85 years old and 3% are disabled. The figures are derived from sample village beneficiary profiles.

## **B.3. Donor and Implementing Agencies:**

### **a. Big Lottery Fund's International Communities programme:**

Barefoot Lawyers Project was supported by the Big Lottery Fund – UK under its International Communities Programme. The Big Lottery funds projects and activities that make communities stronger and more vibrant, and that are led by the people who live in them. The Big Lottery Fund's International Communities programme aimed to help disadvantaged communities around the world. The major purpose of this programme was to bring real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. The Barefoot Lawyers Project which substantially contributed towards legal empowerment of 9284 SC & ST women (target – 9000) mainly came under the "Human Rights" focus area of the International Communities programme. BLP has immensely improved the ability of the most disadvantaged people (SC and ST women) to exercise their human rights for gender and social justice, poverty reduction and basic services.

### **b. Integrated Village Development Trust (UK Project Partner)**

The Integrated Village Development Trust (IVDT) was the UK partner of the Barefoot Lawyers Project. IVDT managed the funding, carried out regular monitoring and reported project progress, problems and achievements to Big Lottery. It had carried the overall responsibility for project delivery. IVDT was founded in 1992 with the aim of relieving rural poverty, especially in India. It supports a range of development work which strengthens rural communities. It operates through local partners and seeks to empower local communities to bring about the changes they need in a manner that is sustainable - socially, economically and environmentally. It focuses on those with the greatest need and the least power – women, SC, ST and OBC, income-poor, destitute, disabled, elderly persons and others. The capacity-building support offered by the Big Lottery has been used to carry out training on project management, monitoring and report-writing, and the Trust has built on this by sharing the responsibilities more evenly.

IVDT has a long-standing relationship with its partner CHALE CHALO, both of which hold fast to the principles of transparency, accountability, cooperation. IVDT does not just provide grant-in-aid to an agreed project, but does everything it can to make the project a success.

In IVDT-supported projects, CHALE CHALO has worked to empower villagers to address their problems and also facilitated working with government, CSOs, PRIs, resource institutions, experts and other development actors essential in achieving positive changes. Though this particular project was a new venture, and has taken their work into a new area, IVDT and CHALE CHALO have had many years of experience in working on rights and entitlements issues. Both were well-placed and well-equipped to carry out the work, and felt confident that this proposal had a realistic expectation of achieving important changes for marginalised communities in an impoverished area, especially for the women.

### **c. CHALE CHALO (India Project Partner)**

The Barefoot Lawyers Project was implemented by CHALE CHALO as Indian project partner. Chale Chalo was founded in 2005 and has been registered under Indian Trust Act – 1882, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) – 2010 and Indian Income Tax Act - 1961 U/S 12 (A) (a). It has also been accredited by Credibility Alliance, New Delhi.

The vision of Chale Chalo is to create an economically, socially, politically, culturally and environmentally sustainable society where people enjoying their human rights without poverty, exclusion, distress, violence and sufferings.

The people involved in CHALE CHALO mostly hail from socio-political movements and people-centred development initiatives that aim for achieving inclusive, equitable, just and sustainable development. Its trustees have come from a range of backgrounds with long experience working for NGOs, both small and large, the focus being on the empowerment of disadvantaged groups for their rights and poverty reduction. The organisation has extensive experience in handling various development projects:

**EMCOR Project** - Empowering Marginalised Communities for Rights and Poverty Reduction through Community Radio, supported by DFID/IVDT–UK in 60 bordering villages of Nuapada, Bolangir and Kalahandi District (July 2009 to March 2014);

**Oxfam Education Project** - Making Right to Education Work in Odisha and Promotion of Quality Education, supported by Oxfam India/BPCL in 31 villages of Kuarmunda Block of Sundargarh District (April 2013 to March 2016);

**CRY Community Radio Project** - Child Community Radio for promotion of children's right to survival, development, protection and participation supported by CRY – Kolkata in 28 villages of Khariar and Boden block of Nuapada District (July 2007 to Sept. 2015), improving access to quality health and nutrition services among marginalised children and women in 20 villages of Golamunda block of Kalahandi district (since October 2015);

**MANGRO Project** – Mangrove regeneration, protection, conservation and management (preserving coastal biodiversity & climate resilience) through community action, environment education, resource center, campaigns and advocacy, supported by IVDT UK in 50 villages and 60 schools in Rajnagar, Mahakalpada, Pattamundai and Aul block of Kendrapara District (since July 2008)

**Aragamee – EU Project** - Nutrition and Income Security of Vulnerable Tribal Communities by improving access to information and relevant government schemes supported by Aragamee – Kashipur / EU – New Delhi in 50 villages of Boden block of Nuapada district as consortium member and block partner (January 2013 to December 2018)

**CKD Action Project** - Initiatives for addressing Chronic Kidney Disease supported by IVDT – UK in 40 CKD affected villages in Nuapada district (since October 2016)

**WIPRO Education Project** - Quality Education through Developing Core Team and Improving Quality Teaching-Learning Practices in Primary Schools supported by WIPRO – Bangaluru in 12 villages of Kuarmunda block of Sundargarh district (since July 2017)

**Barefoot Lawyers Project (BLP)** - Legal Empowerment of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Women for accessing justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services supported by IVDT / Big Lottery Fund – UK in Nuapada District (July 2015 to June 2018)

**BLP Follow Up** – Strengthening SC/ST women forums/federations and sustainability of BLP actions & impacts supported by IVDT/Big Lottery-UK (July 2018 to December 2018)

**WE CAN Campaign** - for prevention of violence against women as Nuapada District network partner facilitated by Aaina – BBSR / Oxfam GB (April 2010 to March 2013)

**Community Action under NRHM** – for piloting VHSCs, village health profiles, community score cards, citizens health reports, Jansambad etc as network member in Pattamundai Block of Kendrapara District supported by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through PFI – New Delhi, KCSD – BBSR and OMRHA – Cuttack (during 2007 – 2009)

**VCRO** - Voice for Child Rights Odisha - addressing child health, nutrition, education, care, protection & participation issues as network member promoted by CRY (since July 2007)

As and when required, the organisation uses its capacity for networking, collaboration, alliance-building and advocacy on rights and entitlements of marginalised communities, environmental protection, and promotion of sustainable development with like-minded NGOs.

CHALE CHALO has a team of 3 senior managers, 2 administrative staff, 4 technical/professionals and 15 field facilitators as well as a more than 60 volunteers, and works closely with local government offices, NGOs, women, youth, adolescents and children groups, community forums and committees, peoples' organisations, educational institutions, activists, experts, resource organisations and networks, etc. It has earned wide regard for its professionalism, integrity and ability to achieve the aims of its projects.

#### **B.4. Project Goal:**

The aim of the project was the legal empowerment of 9000 SC/ST women, enabling them to protect their rights, and access justice, poverty reduction programmes and basic services, increasing their control over their lives.

#### **Progress towards achieving Project Goal:**

This was one in a line of ground-breaking projects implemented by the Chale Chalo/IVDT partnership, and one of the most innovative. Through it the beneficiaries were decisively and pro-actively involved in the entire project cycle and took ownership to move ahead step by step to achieve the project goal and sustain the impacts during and beyond the project period. More than 9000 SC/ST women internalised the values of the Indian Constitution as enshrined in the preamble and learned their fundamental rights and duties. They developed functional legal literacy on RTI, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, free legal aid, women rights, ORPSA, GNA, NFSA, MGNREGS, NHM, RTE, pension and housing schemes, FLRA and provisions for basic services, etc. These women have been instrumental in making their families and community members aware of and about legal provisions, mobilised and led the women's groups and communities to successfully address denial cases and access justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services. During the last three years the legally-empowered SC and ST women have worked collectively and achieved more than 95% NFSA



ration cards, pensions (for widows, elderly person, the disabled, single women), National Social Benefit Scheme, JSY/Mamata Yojana (mother and child benefits), housing, drinking water, FLRA, delayed wage payments and food rations, MDM, ICDS services, etc., for genuine eligible beneficiaries. In spite of some unresolved systemic issues, women have claimed and achieved work and timely payments under MGNREGS for themselves and their family members, especially during drought years in order to avert mass distress migration in project villages. The women have taken up their own rights and entitlements denial cases, as well as of their families and communities, to PRIs, block and district administrations, and addressed them successfully. They have held dialogue and negotiations with authorities and duty bearers and peacefully addressed their grievances by using existing grievance redress mechanisms at block and district level.

Access to poverty reduction programs and basic services has brought positive improvements in living conditions and visibly reduced extreme poverty. There is perhaps now a need to move from dependency to greater economic self-reliance, adopting sustainable livelihoods and income increment. Along with increased demands and access to basic services, there is a need for improvement in quality, quantity and timely delivery of services.

### B.5. Expected Project Outcomes and Achievements

The project had three major expected outcomes and the achievement indicators under each outcome are very much impressive.

#### Achievements against Expected Outcome 1:

Improved access to free, fair and fast legal and justice services for SC/ST women, enabling them to protect their human rights and claim their entitlements without corruption.

**Table 1: Indicators depicting targets and achievements under project outcome 1:**

Sl. No.	Targets	Achievements
a	7200 direct beneficiaries with access to legal support and free legal aid (due to project and campaign for proper implementation of statutory provision) by end of project year 3 (baseline - 88 beneficiaries just heard about provision of free legal aid)	Training and supported actions under project enabled 7952 beneficiaries to understand the legal provision for equality before the law, equal access to law, and free legal services for women, SC, ST and poor and access these and address denial cases, injustices and violence as needed
b	Stage of implementation of Gram Nayalayayas, bringing accessible legal provision to local level (No plans (start); Awareness created (Y1); dialogue at state/district level (Y2); Implementation for benefit of 9,000 and plans for replication elsewhere	Awareness, Dialogue and Advocacy on GNA continued, demands generated in district and state involving CSOs, justice providers, legal practitioners, govt officials, campaigners etc. Preliminary feasibility surveys for setting up new Gram Nayalayayas done by district courts. One new Gram Nayalaya recommended at central location point of 3 project blocks covering around 300,000 population.
c	Incidence of bribe demands and/or obstruction for direct beneficiaries in rights and justice claims (reduced due to women's use of RTI, OPSGCA, etc). At the beginning 7,200 beneficiaries used to / ready to pay bribe and target	7612 beneficiaries learned RTI & 7517 ORPSA, accessed information/services by visiting offices. 1760 used RTI & 6830 used ORPSA and received services and/or benefits, majority got benefits. 81% reduction of bribes demanded with 7600

	was to reduce the number of bribe givers among beneficiaries to 3,240 by end of project	beneficiaries (out of 9284) committed non-payment of bribes during the period from July 2015 to June 2018
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### Achievements against Expected Outcome 2:

Increased ability of SC/ST women to participate in the justice and decision-making processes of their communities, leading to more women-friendly and pro-poor rights and service provision

**Table 2: Indicators depicting targets and achievements under project outcome 2:**

Sl. No.	Targets	Achievements
a	Number of DAWFs active in taking up justice and rights issues, & achieving improvements in service delivery, esp. MGNREGS, PDS, IGP, basic services.  90 DAWFs (9000 SC/ST) formed, prioritised justice & rights issues, and acting on major issues with guidance of BLs, CJMs & Facilitators	98 DAWFs with current 9284 members further strengthened. 9 Sub-Cluster, 3 Block and 1 District Federations of DAWFs formed, oriented & activated.  90 DAWFs with help of federation leaders actively took up justice/rights, poverty reduction, and basic services issues independently and ensured benefits.
b	Use of RTI, OPSGA, Budget Advocacy, etc by SC/ST women to ensure proper implementation of poverty reduction programs (MGNREGS, PDS & IGP) and basic services. 900 beneficiaries involved in using RTI, OPSGA, and 5 villages with Budget Advocacy & Tracking - to ensure proper delivery of pro-poor policies	8839 beneficiaries visited GP, Block, RWSS, CDPO, HSC, PHC, CHC, BEO, Tahasil, etc, used RTI (1760), ORPSA (6830), accessed information, benefits & services under PDS/NFSA, MGNREGS, welfare schemes & basic services. 15 villages started Budget Analysis, Advocacy & tracking for benefit of poor
c	Percentage of those attending and participating in Palli and Gram Sabhas to be women (note: legal minimum of 10 pc is rarely enforced) Palli Sabha 8 per cent, Gram Sabha 5 per cent to Palli Sabha 50 per cent, Gram Sabha 30 percent by project end	48.5% women (4507 out of 9284) attended Palli Sabhas held in February 2018, finalised beneficiaries for welfare schemes & list of development work in villages. 29% women (2698 out of 9284) attended Gram Sabhas held in March 2018, reviewed and endorsed beneficiaries list and development works in GP.

### Achievements against Expected Outcome 3:

Improvement of service delivery to SC/ST women by using the law and legal means to hold duty-bearers to account, leading to better access to poverty reduction programmes and improved services

**Table 3: Indicators depicting targets and achievements under project outcome 3:**

Sl. No.	Targets	Achievements
a	Number of direct beneficiaries (SC/ST women) accessing 3 major poverty	9166 beneficiaries received Ration Cards & subsidised food under FSA, 6635 to

	reduction programmes (MGNREGS, Food Security (PDS), IGP) increased from 3420 start to 7,200 end of year 3	MGNREGS works, 312 linked with IGP and around 70% benefited from housing schemes. And over 12000 non-SC/ST poor of project & neighbouring villages were supported to get Food Security, MGNREGS and other benefits.
b	No. of direct beneficiaries (SC/ST women) accessing basic services (health, maternity & childcare, water, sanitation) increased from 2,790 (start); to 5,400 (EOY3)	Service Support Camps & project enabled 8839 beneficiaries to access safe drinking water through 198 applications and visits to offices and 6724 families got latrine/sanitation. All eligible women/children got NHS, JSY & MAMATA benefits & 75% accessing free health service/medicine as required.
c	No. of direct beneficiaries (SC/ST women) Below the Poverty Line (BPL). Reduced from 7,470 (start); to 5,400 (EOY3)	Y2 & Y3 saw only 10-30% crop loss (Y1 30-90%). Project targeted poor under NFSA, MGNREGS, pensions etc, (cumulative accessed in Y3 - NFSA: 9166, MGNREGS: 6635, OP: 4113, WP: 870, DP: 581, DB: 104, 30+SW: 25). 5222 targeted poor SC/ST families BPL EOY3 with rapid reduction of cases of hunger, starvation, distress and chronic poverty.

### **B.6. Few Exceptional Outcomes / Impacts**

The Poverty Reduction and Basic Services Support Camps mobilised not only the SC/ST beneficiaries but also many from other poor categories. The project team, BLs, CJMs & Women Leaders helped to fill in forms, assemble documents, arrange dialogue with officials and submit forms. Similarly, DAWF members were guided and supported for claiming and gaining MGNREGS jobs and crop loss compensation in a drought year (Yr.1). As a result, 8,059, 3,015 and 6,700 poor families got food grain, MGNREGS work and drought compensation.

The distance of project villages from GP & Block HQs, Cluster and Project Offices, and lack of all-weather roads, created problems for beneficiaries to attend programs and visit offices. The project resolved this by arranging vehicles when required, and engaging family members and village volunteers to assist beneficiaries with safe and timely transport. Facilitators working in remote areas had additional assistance to improve mobility.

Five staff were selected as Para-Legal Volunteers and Chale Chalo was selected as Convener of Sinapali Block NGO Forum; 52 DAWF Leaders stood in PRI elections for the first time and 14 were elected; 571 widows who had lost hope of receiving their pension, managed, with the help of project, to get their pension and national family welfare support, Nearly 100% disabled, destitute, and single women over thirty were linked with govt benefits; 6,724 households constructed latrines, and the drinking water situation improved in project villages due to mobilisation and demand by DAWFs

Beneficiaries started using 3 provisions under RTI (visiting offices & accessing documents, ensuring so-motto declaration, and submitting applications) to access information, and used ORPSA for getting services. The issue of delay in payment under MGNREGS in Gadapadar

project village was taken to the National Human Rights Commission and Chief Secretary, Govt. of Odisha by a DAWF, with the guidance of the Legal Advisor and Project Team. The District administration paid the arrears for that village and others. Two staff become Citizen Reporters of Zee Kalinga News and reported on the water scarcity issue. Roping in resource organisations and individuals, and utilising their expertise in project actions, increased confidence and strength to the actions of SC/ST women leaders in Public Arena, ensuring benefits to families and communities

Beneficiaries have been involved in the project beyond expectation. They have reflected their real needs and developed ownership. Their feedback and inputs have been used in creating and developing the action plan, programs, forums, federations & IEC materials, encouraging their pro-active lead roles in the project. The involvement of beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation of activities and achievements has made it possible to address the most serious needs of the beneficiaries. During drought years, the team and DAWFs worked relentlessly for ensuring food security, crop damage compensation and MGNREGS work and timely wage payment for the most vulnerable persons and families without losing track of the overall aims of the project. Besides, sustained positive relationships with duty bearers led to them pro-actively dealing with issues, visiting villages & working with DAWFs to resolve problems.

The re-constitution of the Taluk Legal Aid Committee at Khariar JMFC, awareness on free legal aid and the support of the project legal advisor, block legal aid advocates and team has led to a rapid increase in access to free legal aid at Taluk level, which was previously unknown to villagers.

Now more than 60% of DAWF members are involved in formal village institutions and helping to improve the delivery of basic services, welfare and development benefits and programs. 80% of SC/ST women beneficiaries are now confident to contest and actively participate in the next PRI elections to lead the development process and address their issues. SC/ST beneficiaries now feel comfortable to visit PRIs and government offices, access information, file RTI applications and interact with local media regarding their most serious issues. Sensitivity and accountability among duty bearers have improved visibly. The expertise of resource organisations and individuals has been mobilised and used for achieving project outcomes and improving the knowledge and skills of SC/ST women.

Villagers now have access to free legal aid and the greater cooperation of officials in the area. It is rare for someone visiting an office to be asked for money or denied access to their rights because of caste or gender. And officials are now more pro-active in carrying out their duties and visiting villages to determine entitlements for genuine beneficiaries

DAWFs are strong and have organised themselves into Federations making it easier to work together on common issues. Several groups have reached out to new villages and are helping them set up their own groups. Almost all the women have been involved in visits to various offices in pursuit of access to benefits and rights, which was unthinkable three or four years ago. Women are now actively involved in the Palli and Gram Sabhas representing 48.5% and 29% respectively of those attending, and they lead Budget Advocacy, helping track and determine government action in their villages.

The achievements are well beyond the targets on all counts, making a significant improvement in the wellbeing of beneficiaries. The action of the women has resulted in gains for an additional 12,000 above the 9,000 targeted.

Without being in the presence of the women it is hard to appreciate the full impact on them of the project, their confidence in dealing with the problems they and their communities face, the

confidence and respect in which they are held by their men folk, communities, government officials and representatives. Barely leaving homes except to work in the fields three years ago, these women are now full participants in the public arena, and an inspiration to all who meet them. Many remarkable positive things have been achieved in just three years, which are difficult to capture, track and record on paper. The novel kind of experiences and success stories of each DAWFs' leader and member, BL, CJM, beneficiary, staff, volunteer, PMMT, CSO & PRI member, service & justice provider, poverty reduction program implementer and others who got involved in the project tell their own story on issues, skill for formulation of appropriate strategies, operational plan, minutely following most required procedures, launching collective campaigns and advocacy, hard work and perseverance for raising the identified issues at different level and achieving success.

## **B.7. Performed Project Activities and Achieved Outputs:**

### **a. Project Team Recruitment, Induction, Training and Engagement:**

1 Senior Manager (part), 1 Legal Advisor (part), 1 Team Leader, 3 Cluster Coordinators, 1 Project Assistant (part) & 9 Project Facilitators were recruited, inducted, oriented, trained and engaged in project work from July 2015 to June 2018, and occasional staff departures managed successfully. 2 Data Gatherers and 1 Social Researcher were engaged to carry out the baseline study during the first year.

### **b. Staff and Volunteer Capacity Building Training:**

29 staff and volunteers were intensively trained on all aspects of the project and on useful laws for transferring the required knowledge and skills for the benefits of SC/ST women. They had been imparted in-depth training on Preamble of Indian Constitution, fundamental rights and duties, constitutional values, formal and informal justice systems, RTI, ORPSA, Gram Nayalayas Act, Free Legal Aid Services, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, SC/ST Atrocities Prevention Act, gender, caste and poverty issues, legal and administrative measures for violation and denial of rights and entitlements, NFSA, MGNREGS, all pension schemes, housing schemes, FLRA, works and schemes under line departments for employment and income generation as well as promotion of forestry, agriculture, horticulture, fishery and allied activities. They also got oriented on NHM, JSY, MAMATA, VHND, GKS, ASHA, health services available at Health Sub-centre, PHC, CHC and DH, etc, RTE & school provisions, ICDS services, RWSS – provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, schemes for village infrastructure including buildings for schools, ICDS centres, health sub-centres and GP office, roads and electricity, etc. They learned about a wide range of schemes, programs and laws available to directly benefit the target beneficiaries. They got equipped to facilitate the learning and actions of BLs, CJMs and DAWFs for accessing justice, services, rights and entitlements. They learned project planning, participatory management, reporting, documentation, monitoring, impact assessment, learning sharing, knowledge transfer, campaigns and advocacy strategies, organisation building, participation, networking, accountability, transparency, value for money. The trained staff and volunteers successfully transferred the skills and knowledge to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders for inclusion of SC/ST women and ensuring all entitled benefits to them.

### **c. Baseline Study and Participatory Mapping of Gaps:**

A Baseline Study was conducted and updated in 18 sample project villages for mapping problems, obstacles and gaps in legal empowerment of SC/ST women and their access to justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services. Through updates during the project, it was possible to identify that the understanding and knowledge base of stakeholders about the ground situation improved and enabled them to develop strategies and initiate appropriate needs-based practical actions for addressing their issues. All targeted beneficiaries, groups and other stakeholders were involved in the process. PRA exercises were conducted to enable target groups to prioritise the issues by consensus.

#### **d. Beneficiary Profiles:**

9284 SC/ST women beneficiary profiles were prepared, computerised and updated for monitoring and tracking project performance at individual and family level. Capacity building support and other inputs were provided, benefits ensured, progress in access to justice; poverty reduction programmes and basic services measured, changes achieved and impacts assessed.

#### **e. Dalit and Adivasi Women Forums (DAWFs) and Federations:**

98 DAWFs, 3 Block & 1 District Federation were formed, strengthened and engaged to lead and sustain the project actions and impacts. DAWFs and Federation members were oriented on project components, project cycle, identifying issues/gaps, laws, schemes, rights and entitlements, forum- and federation-building and management, spreading legal literacy, action on issues, addressing denial cases, involvement and ownership in project planning, actions, review, monitoring, assessment, records keeping, and so on. The formation, strengthening and sustaining of DAWFs provided a strong platform for marginalised women to learn, grow and act autonomously and without the threat of male or caste control, improving their rights literacy, confidence and ability to take action and achieve their rights. DAWFs and their forums have numerous success stories in claiming their rights and bringing benefits for their families and communities. They have gained high respect in their families, communities, villages, PRIs, CSOs and government offices and built partnership with legal aid committee, PRIs, government departments and CSOs, for effectively dealing with their problems and for long term sustainability.

#### **f. Exposure Visits**

19 BLs, 19 CJMs, 24 staff and volunteers, and 36 women leaders, went on exposure visits to Taluk / JFMC, District and High Court, Free Legal Service Committees, State Legal Service Authorities, state level statutory commissions (RTI, Human Rights, Women, Food Rights), other government offices, NGOs, Networks and Activists working on women empowerment, RTI, Food Security, ORPSA, Free Legal Aid, GNA, RTE, NHM, budget advocacy, social accountability, gender justice and prevention of violence against women, etc., as well as attending the National RTI Convention, meeting with Odisha Budget and Accountability Centre, Workshop on Social Accountability Tools organised by a specialist organisation, meeting with women leaders, and other programs and events for mutual sharing of experiences, knowledge and skills.

The staff, BLs, CJMs and DAWF Leaders learned from other related initiatives in Odisha and India, were inspired, and applied these lessons to project works. On their return to the project, the learning and experience gained from the exposure visits was shared with other beneficiaries and stakeholders and used for their benefit of the groups and project.

#### **g. Visit of Senior Manger / Director to UK:**

From 30 August 2018 to 23 September 2018, the Director of CHALE CHALO visited the UK. He had meetings with IVDT trustees, volunteers, and different groups and individuals working on similar issues. He shared project experience with others and learned from them. He had a meeting with Big Lottery Fund Project Manager in Birmingham office, talking about project progress and achievements and sharing the learning. He also received feedback on the project from the Big Lottery and new ideas for future projects and follow-up action. Besides, the director learned a number of new lessons and ideas on development issues especially for bringing tangible changes in the lives of disadvantaged sections of people through interactions with eminent personalities in UK. The visit strengthened linkages with different groups supporting the cause for development.

#### **h. Workshop for Joint Monitoring:**

152 different stakeholders were oriented and engaged in joint monitoring of project works at different levels. Representatives of beneficiaries, local communities, CSOs, PRIs and other stakeholders participated in the workshop, evolved system, reviewed and made plan for effective joint monitoring of the functioning and progress of the project and its impacts, and sharing and incorporating the learning into project cycle management on a regular basis.

#### **i. PMMT Members Training:**

24 PMMT members were oriented and engaged in planning, management and monitoring of project works. The Project Management and Monitoring Team was drawn from CHALE CHALO, beneficiary forums, local NGOs, CBOs, PRIs, informal/formal justice actors, programme implementers, service providers, activists and media. The Project Management Team met monthly to review progress and develop the plan and programmes for the coming period and included beneficiary representation

#### **j. Sensitisation of informal and formal justice/service providers and program implementers:**

373 formal and informal justice and service providers, and program implementers, and 232 PRI representatives got sensitised on gender, human rights, SC/ST women issues and friendly service delivery mechanism. They have made visible effort to support SC/ST women and improve their effectiveness and accountability while performing their duties. Pro-women, pro-SC/ST and pro-poor attitudes with an enabling environment have made it easier for marginalised women to participate in local decision-making and development works. The project worked closely with existing caste, tribal and village committees and encouraged them to include SC/ST women, and improve the delivery of justice to them. DAWF members were trained on the processes of justice delivery by involving the elders for their communities who had the knowledge and experience. 60% of DAWF members are now on different village level committees and some of them have been elected to PRIs. Their roles in bringing development programs to villages and ensuring proper implementation have been well recognised. In some villages their presence and opinion are being sought in their own caste and/or tribal committees on family disputes and societal issues. Officials and PRI representatives have been made gender-sensitive through training, workshops, discussion and dissemination of information about existing laws on gender equality, protection of women and prevention of crime against women. Awareness of 'Women's Desk' in Police Station has been useful for encouraging SC/ST women to approach the police for justice.

#### **k. Capacity building training for other CSO representatives and stakeholders**

188 other CSO representatives and stakeholders have been trained on issues of dalit and tribal women. different components of project, and the roles they can play in facilitating participatory implementation and management of project works and sustaining project actions and impacts. With the assistance of the project team, resource people with the necessary expertise and experience were used to carry out training.

#### **l. Capacity Building Training for Community Justice Mentors (CJMs):**

190 CJMs and 64 active members of DAWFs have been trained, educated, informed and updated about various aspects of the project, basic justice system and provisions, poverty reduction programs and services for poor SC/ST women, and continuously engaged in transferring this knowledge and information to SC/ST women. They have been acting as grassroots legal provision educators on justice system, poverty reduction and basic services. They have been raising awareness amongst the target beneficiaries and have improved their knowledge on pro-women, pro-poor, pro-SC/ST laws, schemes and programs contributing to positive change in their lives and the condition of their families.

They have specifically imparted knowledge on the Preamble of Indian Constitution, fundamental rights and duties, constitutional values, formal and informal justice systems, RTI, ORPSA, Gram Nayalayas Act, Free Legal Aid Services, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, SC/ST Atrocities Prevention Act, gender, caste and poverty issues, NFSA, MGNREGS, all pension schemes, housing schemes, FLRA, works/schemes under line departments for employment and income generation as well as promotion of forestry, agriculture, horticulture, fishery and allied activities. They also got oriented on NHM, JSY, MAMATA, VHND, GKS, ASHA, health services available at Health Sub-centre, PHC, CHC and DH etc, RTE and school provisions, ICDS services, RWSS – provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, schemes for village infrastructure including buildings for schools, ICDS centres, health sub-centres, GP office, roads and electricity.

**m. Capacity Building Training for Barefoot Lawyers (BLs)**

190 BLs and 60 active DAWF members have been trained and provided with follow-up support on various aspects of the project, provisions under RTI, ORPSA, Gram Nayalayas Act, Free Legal Aid Services, existing formal and informal justice systems, schemes, programmes and laws directly benefiting women, children, elderly person, destitute, income poor and the disabled. They learned details about MGNREGS, Food Security Acts, pension and housing schemes, Right to Education, National Health Mission, Rural Water and Sanitation Scheme etc. They helped the DAWFs and beneficiaries to use the laws and procedures in practical ways to address denial of justice, services and rights/entitlements. BLs are working as justice advocates and providing support to SC/ST women to access justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services.

**n. Capacity Building Training for DAWF Leaders as Peer Educators**

574 SC/ST women leaders representing 98 DAWFs have been trained and supported to gain and use knowledge on various aspects of the project, basic justice system and provisions, poverty reduction programs and services for poor SC/ST women, and are passing this knowledge to other SC/ST women, practically addressing denial cases, gaps and problems, using legal and administrative remedies, passing knowledge and hand holding support etc. They learned and used the laws/programs/services as in point k.

**o. Capacity Building Training for DAWF Leaders on organisation, campaigning, and action**

556 SC/ST women leaders representing 98 DAWFs have been trained on various aspects of the project, organisation and federation building, forum and federation management, participatory micro-operational planning and implementation of project works in villages, data-gathering, record-keeping with case studies, campaigning and action in using legal/administrative remedies with experts and BLs for resolving issues. In addition, 65 federation leaders were oriented at Block and District level on organisation and federation building, management and sustenance, issues, relevant laws, skill and knowledge building and transfer, formulation of strategies, campaigns and actions on their issues. They all learned basic functional legal literacy on relevant laws as mentioned above (in point k).

**p. Training on RTI**

162 Dalit & Adivasi women, CSOs and activists were trained in the use of RTI - self disclosure, inspection, application to PIO, Appellate Authority and Commissioner, ORPSA and other laws to claim and access their rights and entitlements. Besides, 24 staff and volunteers of Chale Chalo have undergone intensive training on use of RTI, and particularly on use of various forms for accessing required important information.

**q. Workshop on community budget analysis, advocacy and tracking:**



209 Dalit & Adivasi women, community leaders, CSOs, youths and students have been oriented on community budget analysis, advocacy and tracking. 32 volunteers have been engaged for budget and provision information-gathering, awareness-building and tracking of MGNREGS, NFSA, ICDS, pensions, line departments and PRI development works, GKS to improve accountability and better implementation in 15 villages. District Budget Watch Group and expert organizations have supported communities to understand the importance of budget, the process for budget preparation, presentation, approval, fund release, utilisation and accountability, etc. Communities have been trained on sources of funds and income of PRIs, budgets of key services; welfare and poverty reduction programs implemented by PRIs and local government offices and how to track expenditures and monitor the progress of service and program delivery. The project team and volunteers got involved in the process of pre-budgetary consultation, budget discussion and post-budget follow-up, and have internalised the importance of budgets for making changes in their lives, families and communities.

**r. Workshop on Odisha Right to Public Service Act**

228 persons were oriented on ORPSA and procedures to obtain services on time, have developed an understanding of ORPSA and have engaged in educating others on law.

**s. Consultations and Workshops on Gram Nyayalaya Act:**

213 participated in debate and campaign on Gram Nyayalaya Act 2008 at District level. 265 persons in State GNA workshop shared status, engaged in debates on needs of GNA, launched advocacy

**t. Poverty Reduction and Basic Services Support Camps:**

33 Poverty Reduction and Basic Services Support Camps and follow-up actions supported more than 3,000 genuine beneficiaries to successfully address rights and entitlements denial cases, claim, reclaim and access NFSA, MGNREGS, pensions, housing, family welfare schemes, drinking water, sanitation, child & mother health and nutrition services, FLRA and other programs and services. In collaboration with PRIs, Block and District officials and specialist resource persons, the project team succeeded in educating the beneficiaries on the various government schemes programmes and guided them to access benefits.

**u. Legal Aid Camps**

31 Legal Aid Camps with follow-up action created awareness on provisions of free legal aid, RTI, ORPSA, Prevention of Domestic Violence and Prevention of SC and ST Atrocities Act as well as legal remedies to address denial of rights and entitlements for around 7000 beneficiaries, and supported and guided around 2,200 to learn how to access free legal aid at Taluk, District and High Court level. Four pro-SC/ST women advocates have been involved in the project, providing free legal advice, and assisting with training BLs and CJMs and supporting beneficiaries to access free legal aid, benefits of lok adalat, address denial cases and access justice system, poverty reduction programs and services. The project has established very effective and sustained relationships between legal practitioners and beneficiaries.

**v. Media interaction with Dalit and Adivasi Women Leaders**

114 SC/ST women leaders, activists and project team members highlighted denial cases and success stories during 3 media interactions in 3 Blocks.

**w. Justice Mela**

767 DAWFs Leaders, CSOs, government officials, activists, justice providers, PRI representatives and others participated in Justice Mela and Women's Day, learned from each other's struggles and achievements during Justice Mela. The beneficiaries had raised the

issues of entitlement cards and developed collective strategies for ensuring 100% BPL/NFSA card, Job card, Land Rights records, birth/death/disabled certificates. etc., for all SC/ST women and families in project villages for unhindered access to food security, employment, income, government services, welfare and poverty reduction programs.

#### **x. IEC Materials**

IEC materials on Justice System, Poverty Reduction Programs and Basic Services, related forms and formats have been developed, distributed and used by beneficiaries for awareness generation and aiding access to benefits with improved skills and knowledge. During the project period the focus was on producing IEC materials on very relevant and useful legal provisions, free legal aid and Gram Nyayalaya Act, Food Security Act, RTI, ORPSA etc had been published, disseminated and used by beneficiaries, PRIs, justice and service providers, staff, volunteers, BLs, CJMs, CSOs and others. MIS of beneficiaries was developed and maintained, project-related information disseminated among project stakeholders and others as needed. Material was mainly produced in-house with reference to related documents and texts produced by government bodies, law houses, and CSOs, and with the support and guidance of subject experts.

#### **y. Review, Planning, Documentation, Monitoring, Impacts Assessment and Learning Sharing**

Monthly/Quarterly Project Review, planning, process documentation, monitoring and Impacts assessment has been done as required. 750 beneficiaries and other stakeholders actively participated in village, cluster and project level annual review and planning processes. 112 participated in annual project learning and sharing workshop.

#### **z. Community Radio and Cultural Events:**

48 Community Radio episodes and 60 cultural events were carried out for mass awareness on issues related to the justice system, poverty reduction programs and basic services. 85 local artists were oriented and engaged on local cultural programs on project issues. Community Radio programmes were made and used by the existing CHALE CHALO team. Local cultural groups were engaged in awareness-building and educating beneficiaries through folk media and cultural activities.

**+. Campaign:** leaders and members of DAWFs carried out door-to-door visits, hamlet and village-level meetings, interest group meetings, petitions and media coverage on issues, and delegations to the offices concerned for addressing their issues and getting redress. Sustained campaign on issues has strengthened the DAWFs, motivated them to take steps till resolving the problems that negatively affect their lives and developed their skills to organise themselves, mobilize communities & other stakeholders and act together.

### **B.8. Coverage of Existing Legal Provisions, Laws, Acts, Schemes, Programs and Services for Legal Empowerment of SC/ST Women and Accessing Benefits**

**a. Legal Structure:** The beneficiaries, project team, BLs, CJM and others learned about the Indian judicial system starting from Supreme Court in Delhi, Odisha High Court at Cuttack, District Court at Nuapada as well as Sessions Courts and Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) at Khariar etc. They learned the judicial power of Tahasildar, Sub-Collectors, Collectors, Revenue Divisional Officer and Divisional Forest Officer, etc., to deal with related civil and criminal cases. They were oriented on quasi-judicial bodies at block, district, state and national levels entrusted with specific powers to deal with specific subjects – e.g. Appellate Officers, State and National RTI Commissioners to hear the case of denial of information, District Child Protection Unit, State and National Commissions for Protection of

Child Rights, State and National Women Commissions, State and National Human Rights Commissions, SC & ST Commissions, Food Rights Commissions etc., which safeguard rights under their specific responsibility. They learned the process and procedure to approach the appropriate judicial and/or quasi-judicial bodies and/or authorities to address denial cases get remedies and justice.

**b. Lok Adalats and Gram Nyayalayas:** During the project period the participants learned about the Legal Services Authority Act 1987 that provided the alternative of dispute resolution through a non-adversarial approach in temporary local courts (called Lok Adalats) which could deal with all but major cases. They learned the simple procedures to attend and approach Lok Adalats and increase their easy accessibility to justice system. The project created opportunities to debate, discuss and campaign on **Gram Nyayalayas Act 2008** which deal with criminal and civil cases settlement through conciliation, but, failing that, will be heard in normal courts. The beneficiaries learned that GNA, could speed up the processes of justice, reduce the distances to attend court, resolve cases through conciliation, and increase the accessibility of justice. The campaign for establishment of Gram Nyayalayas has resulted in the search for a suitable place for village court for 3 blocks.

**c. Legal aid:** The project raised awareness on Article 39A of the Constitution of India that provides for equal justice and free legal aid. With the support of the legal advisor, IEC materials and training, the stakeholders learned about the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, which provides for free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

**d. Informal legal structures:** The project beneficiaries and other stakeholders had the opportunity to learn and analyze the informal legal structures which have been used within small SC and ST communities to resolve disputes by negotiation. They reflected on the male-dominated process for delivery of justice and got sensitised to encourage women to participate and make the informal legal structures of their own communities friendly to the women. They realised that the informal structures are generally fairly effective at maintaining a peaceful status quo in small communities. The project supported the informal justice providers and beneficiaries to acquire the knowledge and skill to take on the maladministration and corruption which all villagers have faced in trying to achieve their rights and entitlements and set a trend to take the challenge for inclusion of women and other groups in the process.

**e. Right to Information, 2005:** The project provided intensive training on RTI to project team, BLs, CJMs, women leaders, CSOs, PRIs and others. They learned that Indian citizens have the right to access required information (with some exception in case of affecting defence, security, sovereignty, relationship with other nations and privacy, etc.) as declared by public authorities so-motto, through office inspection and submission of applications. They learned the procedures for filling up and submitting the prescribed application forms for PIO, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> appellate authorities and RTI commission through practical training facilitated by renowned RTI experts. The beneficiaries and others realised the usefulness of RTI to increase accountability and transparency, and how it can be used to apply pressure on duty-bearers to carry out their responsibilities. It has been extraordinary how even the mention of RTI caused officials to set right matters which had been awry for months or even years.

**f. Odisha Right to Public Service Act, 2012** The beneficiaries and other stakeholders learned and used ORPSA to reduce corruption in public service delivery. The Act established services as a right and with penal action for those who failed to deliver. If a citizen failed to

receive the service to which they were entitled, a complaint could be made, and, if found to be justified, the officer responsible fined.

**g. Human Rights and Duties:** The team, beneficiaries and other stakeholders learned about and reflected on fundamental rights - equality before the law and of opportunity; freedom of speech, expression, assembly, association, safeguard from exploitation (i.e. forced labour or trafficking); cultural and educational freedom; and the right to constitutional remedies for enforcing fundamental rights as enshrined in Indian Constitution. They also learned and used Right to Information, Right to Education (for all children aged 6-14), Right to Employment under MGNREGA, Forest Land Rights, and others. The project also contributed to learning and using the fundamental duties of an Indian citizen as follows:

Abide by the Constitution and respect national flag & national anthem; follow ideals of the freedom struggle; protect sovereignty and integrity of India; defend the country and render national services when called upon; Spirit of common brotherhood; preserve composite culture; Preserve natural environment; Develop scientific temper; Safeguard public property; Strive for excellence; and Duty of all parents and guardians to send their children in the age group of 6-14 years to school.

**h. Poverty reduction programmes and services:** The beneficiaries learned about the key provisions under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), designed to provide each person with 100 days of work each year paid at the minimum wage; the National Food Security Act (NFSA) known earlier as Public Distribution System (PDS), which ensures basic food supplies (highly subsidised by central and state government) to those who most need it; Forest Land Rights Act (FLRA), which enables those live and work on forest land to claim the land right certificate. They also learned and used other provisions for pensions, housing, health, maternity and childcare services, education, infrastructure development (e.g. access roads, electricity connection), drinking water and sanitation, etc. The project raised awareness about their rights to these schemes and services, empowered women to claim and access them.

**i. Local government and representation:** The beneficiaries learnt and re-learnt about Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and increased their participation in elections at Gram Panchayat (for a village or group of villages), Panchayat Samiti at Block, and Zilla Panchayat at District Level. They learned about the importance and processes of PRI elections and tried to utilise fifty percent reserved seats for women, especially for SC/ST women as per proportion to their numbers. They actively participated in decision-making processes at village (Palli Sabha) and GP (Gram Sabha) level in regard to delivery of welfare services, implementation of poverty reduction programmes, local infrastructure development, etc. The increased participation of SC/ST women and demands for benefits to genuine beneficiaries under NFSA, MGNREGS, pensions, housing and other welfare and development programs and schemes have increased accountability among PRIs in the project area. Women's participation in Gram Sabha has increased from below 10% to 28% and in the Palli Sabha from 24% to 49%; hopefully the trend will continue till there are at least 70% women attenders in these important grassroots level decision-making, review, planning and monitoring bodies, thus breaking the unholy alliance and dominance of vested interests.

## **B.9. Cross-Cutting Issues addressed through Project**

**a. Diversity and Inclusiveness:** The project successfully included SC & ST women, widows, the destitute, elderly and disabled. The specific target group was selected through lengthy and wide-ranging consultation. The project assisted and empowered SC/ST women to access justice services and basic rights and entitlements. They improved their legal and rights literacy, confidence and ability to take action and achieve their legal rights, and to improve

gender-sensitivity, accessibility, equity and accountability in the provision of justice and services. All staff and volunteers were oriented in respecting diversity and addressing inclusion.

The project was based on CHALE CHALO's many years' experience on an inclusive approach to development which contributed to its design and effectiveness. Everyone in the project area, and in the target groups, who would benefit from the project and contribute achieving outcomes has been reached. This was achieved through:

- Designing the project to ensure the structure, approach, training materials, times of meetings, etc., were user-friendly and maximised participation;
- Wide ranging consultations with beneficiaries, communities and all stakeholder representatives for developing and designing project proposal and business plan and ensured participatory implementation of the same in letter and spirit;
- Carrying out and updating participatory baseline and village surveys;
- Working closely with target communities to ensure all those who were entitled were included in the project;
- Empowering village women to act as peer educators, leaders and activists within their own communities and beyond;
- Carrying out house-to-house visits through the project to encourage full participation, address issues and provide support and/or counselling as necessary;
- Providing on-going training, guidance and support to encourage SC/ST women, disabled, destitute, elderly persons, income poor and victims of injustice & rights denial cases to participate and gain confidence;
- Ensuring all training modules, materials and training methodologies were appropriate for those involved, some not literate, but who ultimately demonstrated their ability to act as confidently and competently as the others;
- Presenting information in ways that are widely accessible, especially using community radio, cell phone audio & video messages, and traditional art forms;
- Involving beneficiary and stakeholder representatives in the project review, planning, monitoring, progress and impact assessment process, which was incredibly helpful in developing and sustaining their ownership of the project works and impacts;
- Promoting the project through the media, at cultural events, through community radio, meetings, group discussions, workshops, conference, conventions, publications, etc., so the maximum number of people could be reached;
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of beneficiaries dealing with many of the major issues which are faced by them and their communities, thus gaining the respect and confidence of the wider community;
- Improving the manner, attitudes and sensitivity of duty bearers, so as to encourage women to present their issues;
- Lessons learnt were shared with beneficiaries and other stakeholders, incorporated into the project approach, structure, as appropriate.

**b. Participation:** BLP achieved the desired outcomes magnificently because of spontaneous and full involvement and ownership of the beneficiaries in the entire project cycle. We have worked closely with beneficiaries, local communities and all other stakeholders to identify the needs, gaps/issues, finalise beneficiaries, and have evolved strategies and operational actions to address the needs. Project planning, implementation, management, monitoring, assessing progress and achievements, and learning lessons, etc., involved beneficiaries at all levels as equal participants. DAWFs were engaged in planning, implementation, and monitoring of project activities at village level with the support of project staff, BLs, CJMs and other stakeholders. 100% SC/ST women were at the centre of decision-making, action,

monitoring and impact assessment. A Joint Management Committees, comprising representatives of the beneficiaries, CHALE CHALO, CSOs and others, was formed, strengthened and engaged at Cluster and Project Level and ensured transparency, accountability, stakeholder involvement and ownership in project activities. Beneficiaries had full freedom and opportunities to give their feedback and raise issues. Their input was taken seriously, considered and incorporated into the review and planning process.

**c. Influencing Opinion:** Barefoot Lawyers were trained and worked with SC/ST women, enabling them to take action and unite with others on issues at local and state level. The DAWFs, project staff and volunteers campaigned for proper implementation of RTI, Free Legal Aid Provision, Gram Nayalayayas Act, Odisha Right to Public Service Act, NFSA, MDM, MGNREGS, RTE, pensions, housing, health, nutrition and sanitation schemes. Training workshops and sensitisation were carried out to enable duty-holders to better perform their duties. The project promoted community budget analysis, advocacy and tracking for poverty reduction and access to services, holding duty-bearers to account. The project developed partnerships between beneficiaries, legal service authorities and CSOs, for long-term sustainability. The project focussed on improving the implementation of existing policy. BLP supported participants to organise themselves to campaign at all levels, and to work with other organisations on issues which cannot be properly resolved locally.

**d. Capacity Building:** Capacity-building, empowerment and advocacy proved the bedrock of enabling disadvantaged groups to act confidently for claiming and accessing their rights and entitlements and achieving project outcomes. Capacity-building was done for all participants – staff, volunteers, BLs, CJMs, DAWF leaders, CSOs, PRIs, formal & informal justice and service providers, program implementers and beneficiaries - through training, workshops, meetings, camps, melas, learning and sharing, exposure visits, IEC materials, engagement of experts, involvement in project cycle, practical action, guidance and hand-holding etc. Beneficiaries developed better understanding of their rights, gained confidence, knowledge and skills to claim and achieve those rights. Information, skills, knowledge, confidence, and organisations (DAWFs) which created a 'safe' environment for marginalised SC/ST women, encouraged them to participate in the wider arena and in their community's decision-making processes. Sensitisation and orientation among duty-bearers, service providers and PRI representatives enabled them to better carry out their responsibilities.

**e. Building alliances, collaboration and networking:** This project gave opportunities for Chale Chalo to work more closely with other NGOs and CSOs at District, State and National Level in India. The project supported the team and beneficiaries to learn as well as share the experiences and achievements of the work on their project. Project information was shared with all stakeholders in the project areas and uploaded onto the website. The BLs, CJMs, DAWFs leaders, staffs and volunteers visited other NGOs, networks, commissions, government offices, legal service authorities and committees, and also participated in conventions, conferences, meetings and workshops dealing with women's empowerment, gender and social justice, RTI, NFSA, women and human rights, justice and service delivery, program implementation and grievance redress etc. The Indian partners and SC/ST women forums and federations built new alliances, developing new opportunities for collaboration and networking, and strengthening the existing ones.

**f. Hard-to-Reach Groups:**

Working with SC & ST women was difficult in some of the project areas. Attitudes in many communities were extremely conservative, and women traditionally were not involved in any activities beyond the household. Initially the project faced resistance from their families as well as the women's own reluctance. It was hard to engage them in the early stages of the project. CHALE CHALO was familiar with these difficulties, and its staff had developed

effective strategies to encourage women belonging to marginalised communities to participate at their own pace. Activities were organised by the team at a time and place to best suit the women, and to enable the maximum number of people to get involved. Where events took place away from the village, arrangements were made and support given to ensure that concerns for safety, finance, etc., were not an impediment to anyone's involvement, especially if they were representing their community. The target groups were involved in the management and monitoring of the project, helping them to develop skills and confidence which strengthened their ability to extend their engagement to the public forum, to which these groups were previously denied access.

The project has done everything to involve those who would benefit most. The actions taken were as follows:

- Project evolved through series of consultations with beneficiaries, CBOs, NGOs, PRIs' representatives, vulnerable communities/groups, justice and service providers, local media, government officials, researchers, activists and others;
- Beneficiaries were involved in village meetings for project village selection process;
- Beneficiaries, BLs and CJMs were selected through FGDs and village meetings;
- The Baseline Study was carried out in 18 selected villages and beneficiary profiles in 98 villages and hamlets done to assess the vulnerability of SC/ST women and include all genuine deserving beneficiaries to ensure project benefits for them;
- Project information was provided to beneficiaries during the formation of the DAWFs, their orientation, capacity building, mobilisation on issues and actions for change;
- The Project summary was translated into Odia, developed and shared with all stakeholders, especially SC/ST women, disabled, destitute and elderly persons, etc.;
- Key project components were shared in CSOs, BL, CJM and DAWF Leaders' trainings;
- Links of beneficiaries, DAWFs/federations were developed with service providers, program implementers, local government bodies, legal advisors and justice providers through direct contact, and camps on Poverty Reduction & Basic Services;
- Beneficiaries were engaged in campaigns on issues of NFSA, MGNREGS, pensions, etc.;
- Project cultural events on relevant laws and issues were delivered through traditional folk drama and songs;
- Household visits, family counselling and informal group meetings were organised when considered advisable;
- Beneficiaries were involved in regular project review and planning meetings to nurture their active involvement, ownership and sustainability of the project;
- The project carried out intensive monitoring, stakeholder meetings, feedback sessions, review and planning with Director of IVDT-UK, contributing to the dissemination of project information among beneficiaries, and their involvement;
- Project activities and issues have been covered in Community Radio episodes and also highlighted by local media for bringing to the attention of the authorities the need to address the problems of beneficiaries not able to reach the authorities
- Efforts were made to include all who were eager to participate, with priority being given to the neediest.

#### **g. Openness & Accessibility**

The project enabled and encouraged the widest possible participation within its specified framework. The project actions mainly operated through Women's Forums. All activities under the project were planned to facilitate the widest possible involvement by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders taking into account all their specific needs and constraints. Beneficiaries and other stakeholder involvement in the Project Management

Team, Joint Management Committees, and in project monitoring meant that the activities of the project were open to scrutiny at all levels ensuring transparency and accountability.

#### **h. Equality Matters**

The project worked among the most disadvantaged communities – SC & ST women - since their needs were the greatest, they had the most serious problems which they were least able to address. They would and did gain the most from project input. Working with SC and ST women, brought tangible benefits, and for their families and communities and others in project villages, GPs, Blocks and District. Large scale pro-activeness was generated and sustained among these marginalised women, and has brought lasting attitudinal changes in the wider community towards initiation, involvement and ownership of their own development. SC/ST women have been fully involved in the process of identifying their needs, working out strategies and applying them in letter and spirit to address the issues. Prime actions of the project have been implemented through the DAWFs (100% SC/ST Women) and the BLs and CJMs (99% SC/ST women) were from the project villages. They were able to identify potential participants with the greatest need, especially the elderly, widows, disabled, destitute, single women, distressed migrants, sick and chronic patients, and the income-poor, and ensured an opportunity for them to participate in the project, address their issues, claim and access their rights and entitlements. The project ensured benefits to target beneficiaries.

#### **B.9. People Responsible for Success of Project Works**

The board of trustees of IVDT and Chale Chalo gave full support and cooperation at all stages of project formulation, designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and self-evaluation. The directors of IVDT and Chale Chalo took lead roles in consultation, developing ideas, writing and submitting stage 1 and stage 2 project proposal along with the business plan, responding to queries, managing project cycle and project team, capturing and sharing project learning and connecting project experiences for future fund-raising. The Project was overseen by Senior Manager (Director) from CHALE CHALO, and managed by the Project Leader with the support of a Legal Advisor and a Project Assistant. The project villages and hamlets were divided into 3 clusters; each cluster comprising around 30 villages/hamlets was managed by 1 Cluster Coordinator and 3 Project Facilitators with support of the Project Leader, Senior Manager, Legal Advisor and Project Assistant. Each Project Facilitator was in charge of around 10 villages/hamlets (known as Sub – Cluster), and in each village/hamlet the project actions were facilitated and managed by one DAWF executive body (comprising 9 to 21 SC/ST women beneficiary representatives) supported by 2 Barefoot Lawyers, 2 Community Justice Mentors and project team.

At village level, the DAWFs had overall responsibility for planning, implementation, review and monitoring of project work with the support of project staff, other village committees, PRI representatives, local CBOs, NGOs, community leaders, activists, justice actors, program implementers and service providers. Project staff, the legal advisor, senior manager and trained BLs and CJMs provided support for capacity building of DAWFs and provided handholding for success of project actions at village and hamlet level, achieving project outputs and outcomes. At the cluster (block) and project (district) level, all the DAWFs were grouped into federations. The DAWFs/Federations become the nodal fora to deal with common problems and issues raised in project villages. 190 CJMs supported by 576 DAWF (SC/ST women) leaders as peer educators and 190 BLs supported by 556 DAWF (SC/ST women) Leaders as community advocates, have played an integral part in the implementation of action related to justice education and practical legal and administrative remedies for addressing justice and rights, poverty reduction and basic services issues. All of them gained increased knowledge, skill and experience and regards of their communities.

#### **B.10. Replication & sustainability**



The prime aim of the project was to effect long-term beneficial change for the participants, and this has been achieved by enabling the beneficiaries themselves to change, and helping them to change the ways in which they were able to access their legal rights, benefits and entitlements. The project ensured sustained awareness and knowledge enrichment on issues, laws, programs and services among SC/ST women, their families and communities and created an enabling environment for learning and actions to access justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services beyond the life of the project. Confidence and self-assurance of beneficiaries along with supportive conditions visibly improved the circumstances of their lives. They have inspired others to join in and become pro-active to address issues, gaps and denial cases. By holding legal and service providers and programs implementers to account, they have ensured that rights and entitlements are properly delivered and continue to be so. By actively participating in the decision-making processes of their communities, they have contributed towards better planning and implementation, and have created models for democratic involvement for serving the neediest persons in their communities. The project has made a significant contribution to building civil society in this deprived and problematic part of Odisha. These gains and changes have been long-lasting. The enthusiasm and selfless actions for change among beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and their continuous achievements have given confidence that the benefits of this project will last for many years to come. This project has involved all the key stakeholders and contributed for strengthening beneficiary organisations linked with PRIs, village institutions, justice system and services, poverty reduction and basic services providers and authorities.

The SC/ST women beneficiaries have been linked with the legal background support of our legal advisor and other benevolent senior advocates in project blocks as well as government free legal aid advocates at Block, Taluk and District level and formal Taluk Legal Aid Service Committee and district legal aid authorities. Their established links with block and district administrations, grievance redress mechanism, line departments, CSOs, forums, networks, media, Activists working on RTI, protection of Human Rights, Women Rights, SC/ST Rights, RTE, Health Rights, Food Rights, etc., have been useful for getting continuous updates, necessary support and guidance for claiming and accessing justice, rights, poverty reduction programs and services, and for addressing denial cases.

The evidence-based advocacy ensured entitlements for genuine beneficiaries and persuaded the district and block administration and PRIs to organise special camps for identification of genuine left-over beneficiaries of pension, national family welfare, food security, housing, mother and child health, nutrition and sanitation schemes. The project works and impacts have been integrated with government and PRI initiatives with the supports of DAWFs for better implementation of welfare programs and basic services and improving access to benefits by SC/ST and other marginalised communities. .

The DAWFs and Federations have taken leadership of project works and impacts. They now have a strong sense that their achievements are their own, and the confidence and experience to be able to continue to deal with the issues that face their communities. As has been mentioned, several are now helping other villages to set up their own groups, an indication that they have moved beyond just self-interest and have the confidence to help others. This bodes well for the future, and we believe that their engagement will ensure that government officials continue to carry out their duties.

The DAWFs in 25 to 30 selected project villages will be engaged for water security for sustainable livelihood and safe drinking water, taking the campaign to another level from accessing government benefits to self-reliant and healthy families.

#### **B.11. Publicity and Promotion:**

Publicity and promotion were an intrinsic part of the working of the project. A wide range of methods of promotion and publicity have been used depending on the purpose and the intended audience.

Community Radio was used as a tool for raising awareness, imparting knowledge, and motivating people to action; a way of drawing together the resources of a wide spectrum of those involved with related issues; also a way of demonstrating through practical real examples what was possible; a way of holding officials to account publicly.

Leaflets, folders and handbooks on specific issues and relevant laws, for beneficiaries, local people, activists and duty-bearers have provided information and guidance on rights and services and accessing them. The project has produced leaflets, folders, handbooks and manuals on project components, basic knowledge on Indian Constitution, Fundamental Rights & Duties, Legislative, Judicial and Executive System, Free Legal Aid, RTI, ORPSA, GNA, NFSA, MGNREGS, Pensions, Housing and other welfare schemes Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Basic Services – Health, Nutrition, Water, Sanitation, Education, communication and electricity etc. Complete guidance and procedures with necessary forms and instructions for applying and accessing information and benefits were given in details in all IEC materials. All these printed materials have been used by, beneficiaries, CSOs, claimants and officials alike.

The project used the media and got good coverage of project activities, issues and achievements in local, state and national papers, radio and television

Internet – website, online networks and forums, have been used for ensuring that news and information was regularly posted for stakeholders and other CSOs and networks working on related issues, and promoting lessons learnt. The project works have been published in the website of both the partners for wider publication.

The project reached out to local, state and national networks of like-minded organisations through attending and speaking in meetings, workshops, training, conferences, conventions and campaigns, and learning from the lessons of others who are working on similar concerns and campaigns, sharing lessons learnt on project.

IVDT has published the project works in its newsletters and arranged meetings with groups, organisations, key individuals and at sharing events with cross sections of people in UK during the exposure visit of the director of Chale Chalo for wider publication of project works and learning from others' work and experience for use in project in India.

## **B.12. Monitoring & Evaluation**

### **a. Participatory Baseline Survey and Beneficiaries Profiles:**

A participatory baseline survey was done and updated in 18 selected villages for identification of gaps and issues, developing common understanding on issues, taking appropriate actions and measuring progress in addressing the issues. 9284 beneficiaries' profiles have been prepared, computerised and updated for tracking the progress of accessing justice system, poverty reduction programs and basic services.

### **b. Regular Internal Monitoring by Chale Chalo:**

The project had inbuilt internal monitoring system. The chief functionaries and trustees kept a close eyes on the progress of the project. They regularly discussed the project work, achievements, and issues, and assessed the progress and impacts at board of trustees meetings, and provided necessary support and guidance. Besides, the director has done day to day monitoring, periodic progress and impact assessment of project works, and guided the

team for timely and quality implementation of project activities, achieving outputs and outcomes. Project Facilitators monitored the project work and assessed the progress and impacts in around 10 villages each and reported to their Cluster Coordinators (CCs). The CCs were responsible for monitoring project activities and evaluating the progress and impacts at Cluster level, having around 30 villages each, and they reported to the Project Leader (PL). The PL was responsible for regular monitoring of project performance and evaluating progress and achievements against expected outputs and outcomes. The Project Team, comprising of 1 PL, 3 CCs, 9 PFs, 1 legal expert, 1 senior manager and 1 project assistant, understood the project well and carried out the monitoring and evaluation of project progress and achievements in proper coordination with a focus on processes and timely completion of project works and achieving the targeted outcomes. The legal expert minutely monitored and evaluated the capacity building initiatives as well as measuring legal learning levels and use of relevant laws/schemes/services among project team, BLs, CJMs, DAWFs, forums, CSOs, informal justice providers, service providers, programs implementers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders from time to time, and supported them for improving their legal knowledge base and practical skills for using legal and administrative provisions for accessing justice, poverty reduction programs and services. The PL and legal expert were accountable to the Director of CHALE CHALO who monitored and assessed the project works on a day-to-day basis by using mobiles, social media, emails, frequently making field visits, participating in the project works and interacting with project participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The director of Chale Chalo was accountable to the director of IVDT and provided regular project updates. IVDT trustees have monitored project performance annually and have been answerable to Big Lottery as required. Detailed evidence-based six monthly and annual project activities and financial progress reports have been submitted by Chale Chalo to IVDT and by IVDT to Big Lottery in time. The inputs and feedback given by Big Lottery have been incorporated in project planning, bringing further improvement in project management and delivery. Big lottery has reviewed end project report on outcomes, achievements, and fund utilisation and provided feedback.

#### **c. Beneficiary and Stakeholders' Involvement in Monitoring:**

In addition to the robust internal monitoring, as an innovation, beneficiaries and other stakeholders had been involved through an independent project-level Project Management & Monitoring Team (PMMT) and village-level DAWFs. The PMMT, including nine beneficiary and stakeholder representatives, carried out regular monitoring of performance at project and cluster level. It formally reviewed and monitored the project with regular field visits and given their feedback to the Project Team. At village level, the executive committee of DAWFs (7-15 women) regularly conducted participatory monitoring of project performance, and formally reviewed and monitored progress at village level every month with support of BLs, CJMs, PRIs, CSOs' representatives and other stakeholders and given their feedback to Project Facilitators and CCs. The project has encouraged them and ensured their own initiatives for identification and prioritisation of gaps, issues, learning about relevant laws, schemes and services, evolving and experimenting strategies and an action plan to address them at community level for better performance of the project.

#### **d. Review Tools**

We have used MIS tools to capture and record quantitative data linked with indicators and targets. Monthly, quarterly and annual progress tracking formats have been developed and used by project staff with the support of senior manager/director, legal advisor and DAWFs to report progress against the project plan/target. Action plan, budget and funds flow have been regularly reviewed, tracked and remedial measures taken by trustees, director/senior manager, project assistant, project leader and other project staff. Case study, critical event analysis, beneficiary and stakeholder interviews and participatory learning review tools have been used to track qualitative progress. Extensive use has been made of digital tools such as

computer, photographic evidence, mobile phone, internet, email and a social media group for communicating and tracking planned project actions and indicators. Weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly and annual action plans, activity and financial reviews, field visits/verification, meetings with beneficiaries and stakeholders, and record verification have been done by project staff at village, cluster, project and partner levels as appropriate as an integral part of monitoring project works. Under joint monitoring, we conducted key informant and beneficiary interviews, village and staff meetings, focus group discussions, justice and basic service provider and program implementer interviews and meetings, and reviewed records and documents to assess project performance. Their input, suggestions and ideas have been integrated into the project plan.

**e. Annual Monitoring by IVDT**

In 2015 one trustee, in 2016 two, and in 2017 again one trustee from IVDT UK made project monitoring visits, spending 10 to 14 days on each occasion. The IVDT representative(s) visited the project office and field areas and monitored the progress of project works, directly reviewed on project works and related matters with staff, volunteers, Chale Chalo functionaries and trustees, joint project management team members, beneficiaries, DAWF and Federation members and leaders, legal advisor, social researcher, CSOs and PRI members, media, government officials and others. Qualitative and quantitative evidence linked with indicators and levels of achievements of outcomes were used to monitor progress. Interviews were held with beneficiaries, team and other stakeholders, and personal accounts of achievements recorded. They attended group meetings in the villages, and got an overall picture of the problems and issues faced and addressed in the project. Accounts and accounting procedures were checked, project records examined, planned activities and achievements compared and learning reflected to assess the progress, identify the gaps so they had been effectively addressed. Problems identified either by the monitors or any of the project participants have been thoroughly discussed, and workable solutions found and adopted. There was ample scope for participants to recognise and raise their problems during visits of IVDT representatives, find solutions, and take action to ensure project achievements. Evidence and data were used by IVDT for assessment of the value of the project and for improving the quality of work.

**B.13. Risks / Challenges faced and addressed:**

The following challenges and risks were faced by the project and have been tackled successfully:

**a. Entrenched caste and gender attitudes:**

The project challenged the dominance of men, upper castes and vested interest groups. The resistance to change made many women reluctant to get involved at the beginning. The project minimised the risk by adopting the following strategies: sensitisation and involvement of community leaders, justice and service providers, etc. on constitutional and legal rights of SC, ST and women; engaging local women as project team members and using them to address sensitive caste and gender issues, provide support to vulnerable groups and individuals, and to act as positive role models. In addition, the SC and ST women, their forum and federation leaders, BLs and CJMs who were selected by the women, then trained and engaged took a lead role in project cycle management and achieving outcomes.

**b. High levels of migration:**

A high level of seasonal migration, especially in the drought year (Year 1), was a great challenge. The project tried it's best to reduce distress migration through increasing access to MGNREGS, NFSA, drought and crops loss compensation, social welfare schemes, services and poverty reduction programmes. Strenuous efforts were made to ensure migrating families got included in project activities, building their awareness, confidence and skill for

claiming and accessing rights and entitlements and finding better livelihood sources in locality.

**c. Illiteracy:**

With women's illiteracy of at 64%, all information and training was provided in a way which did not necessitate reading. Much of the awareness-raising and passing on of information were done using traditional mutual sharing of information, knowledge, ideas and experience methods, and community radio, all of which have proven their effectiveness. Staff and volunteers transferred the skills by using appropriate ICT materials, group-learning and action, community radio, pictures and mobilising educated village women to help. Non-literate or newly literate were included equally and had access to project benefits.

**d. Conflict with rebel groups:**

During project operation there was no direct conflict with rebel groups. The team worked very closely with SC & ST women beneficiaries, their families, forums & federations, PRIs, BLs, CJMs, CSOs, justice/service providers and other stakeholders for improving access to justice, poverty reduction programs and basic services by most excluded marginalised SC/ST women. The project had very strong and sustained support from local beneficiaries, communities and others. An approach of inclusiveness, sensitivity and transparency has been appreciated by all, and gave nil chance for left wing groups to stand in the way of empowering SC/ST women to deal with their issues. Empowering local communities and improving justice, poverty reduction and basic service delivery have proven extremely effective ways of reducing the attractions of the rebel cause to the poor.

**e. Physical security issues and lack of social confidence for women participants:**

Initially, fears about safety and lack of social confidence made many women reluctant to get involved with activities outside home, and their families discouraged them. By having more than two-thirds of the staff female, the BLs & CJMs 100% women, the beneficiaries all SC/ST women: by creating the DAWFs and federations as safe places for women, a favourable situation was developed which encouraged women to become involved and take part in collective learning, planning and action, building up their confidence to participate and take ownership in the project and public arena. All staff were well equipped to find creative solutions when problems arise. The time and place of meetings and programs were finalised by women themselves considering their safety and ability to attend, and arrangements were made to provide support as needed, without fail. Women rapidly gained confidence and became effective in dealing with their problems.

**f. Recruitment and retention of staff:**

Chale Chalo luckily managed to recruit, train, engage and retain the majority of its committed staff, particularly women with the skills and qualities required for the successful implementation of BLP. Posts were widely advertised in 3 local newspapers, on the organisation's website and online recruitment sites. The staff selection committee comprised subjects and HR experts, and recruitment was done in a fair and transparent manner. Chale Chalo organised a very effective induction and capacity building program for staff. Women staff's safety issues, difficulties in learning of relevant laws/schemes/services/ programs and transferring the same to beneficiaries, comparing the realities on the ground, adopting and applying realistic practical strategies to address denial cases and ensuring access to rights and entitlements for the most deprived SC/ST women and other concerns were taken into account while engaging and capacitating the staff. Besides, there was a list of potential people working as staff or volunteers in other projects, other NGOs or engaged in BLP other than as staff for immediate filling of any vacancy, and the board of trustees of Chale Chalo authorised the director to take appropriate necessary steps for further staff engagement in case of vacancy for best interest of the project. All project participants received gender

awareness training. Under the guidance and able leadership of Director Chale Chalo, the team ensured effective management of the BLP cycle; the team enjoyed their works and the risk of massive dropout and hampering of project work due to non-retention of staffs was been minimised.

**g. Other Problems and Challenges faced and tackled:** Project works were affected during PRI elections in 2017. The team minimised the risk by engaging the candidates in raising SC/ST women issues.

The fall in Exchange Rate worried the Indian (and the UK) partner. Extreme economy by Chale Chalo and minimum supports from IVDT for currency shortfall helped tackled situation.

There was no Taluk Legal Aid Committee in JMFC Khariar and disinterest of government for implementation of GNA on a large scale, barred the poor to easily access justice. Support from district legal service authority, debate, discussion and campaign by CSOs, advocates, retired judges, media and activists for implementation of GNA and provision of free legal aid were helpful. The feedback of beneficiaries and stakeholders was taken into account when the risks were reviewed and corrective decisions and measures were taken in Planning Meetings.

#### **B.14. CONCLUSION**

Everyone who has come into contact with this project has been impressed by its achievements, by the way it has transformed the lives of so many people, apparently almost effortlessly. Of course, it has been far from effortless. There is no doubt that much of the success of the project lay in the careful planning, based on years of experience. Knowing the area, the people, and the nature of the work, meant that it was possible to involve all participants right from the beginning, and this too was crucial to its success. The level of commitment was extraordinarily high; everyone felt that they had a stake in making it a success, and that it was “their” achievement, as individuals and groups. This is only possible when the leadership has the confidence and courage to treat everyone with respect and regard them as of equal value, to listen to them and honour their contributions. As has been mentioned earlier in the report, timing was also an important factor: twenty years earlier, and possibly the women and government institutions would not have been ready for this; twenty years later and, hopefully, such a project would no longer be necessary.

It should also be said that the support from the main funder has been invaluable. This applies not just to the funding of the main body of the work, but also to the additional support throughout the project: from the preparation stage when money was provided for the consultation process, right through to consent that the outstanding balance could be used to extend the work of the project for another six months. The flexibility and support that they showed was incredibly helpful.

As for the specific achievements of the project, these have been spelt out in detail through the body of the report. However, it bears repeating that many of the women involved in this project had previously had almost no experience of life outside their families and immediate community. Many were illiterate, and most had accepted the roles determined for them by society: mother, wife, housekeeper, cook, field-hand. Few had ever taken part in any significant decision-making, even within their own families. Most were diffident about getting involved, though it had been remarkable that, during the consultation process, men had generally shown support for the idea.

First steps were difficult for some of the staff, too. The experience was very varied, and for some, this was their first job. Few had ever worked in such remote villages, or had to deal

with such complicated content (so many laws and government schemes). It was daunting, but through their induction and training, they developed into a tight and mutually supportive team, sharing the problems they faced, learning from each other, and laughing at some of the ridiculous situations. They valued the respect that they were shown, and the ongoing training that they received. It is hoped, and believed, that this will stand them in good stead when they take on new jobs elsewhere.

Having such a high proportion of female staff paid real dividends. It helped the beneficiaries feel comfortable about beginning to come together, and talk about the problems that they faced. In the company of women they quickly gained confidence. Very soon there were a large number of women who were happy and enthusiastic to take on leadership roles, for which they received training. And the lessons they learnt were passed on to the other women. Taking action on issues was a big first step, especially if it entailed visits to the Panchayat, Block or District Office where few had ever been before. Project staff gave guidance and support, and with their first victories, the women and their groups felt they could conquer the world. They went from strength to strength, and by the end of the three years, few would have had any recollection of those tentative first steps. They had so accepted their new roles, and so had their families and communities, that 60% of them are members of various village institutions (SMC, GKS, and so on), and large numbers of them attend and participate in Palli and Gram Sabhas, the main decision-making bodies for their communities.

These women have achieved drinking water for their villages, had over 6,000 latrines built, resolved problems within their village schools, negotiated payment of outstanding wages for MGNREGS work, achieved Food Security cards, pensions, maternity benefits, housing, and much else. They have negotiated work for a wide range of infrastructure projects, and ensured it was properly managed. Much of this work has led to significant improvements to their villages – access roads, check dams, and so on. The monetary value of all of this completely overshadows the initial investment in the project. But the most significant change is in the women themselves, their complete transformation into confident people who can work together to deal with their problems, who won't take "no" for an answer.

And this change in the women is reflected in the way in which they are regarded. They have earned the respect of the menfolk in their families and communities (there is nothing like brining in some extra money or other benefits to get people on your side!). When they visit government offices, they are no longer dismissed out of hand or asked for bribes. They are listened to, because officials have learnt that these women know their rights, and are not afraid to use the law to ensure that they get everything to which they are entitled.

In fact, service delivery has improved beyond all expectation. An example not mentioned earlier is where the women of the project had persistently taken denial cases of elderly persons, the destitute, widows, disabled and other weaker sections to the District and Block administration on grievance redress days. On persuasion of the DAWF leaders and project team the District administration for the first time ordered special camps, not only in project GPs, but also in all the GPs headquarters in the district, to identify potential beneficiaries of pension, housing, food security and other schemes. With the help of DAWF and Federation leaders and the project team, a doorstep investigation was carried out to check eligibility and ensure access to entitled benefits. It was the first time such an exercise had been carried out, and is a practice that has been adopted by the state government.

It had been felt at the beginning of the project that three years was too short a period. However, probably because of a combination of all the factors mentioned above, it provided sufficient, and by the end of the project the women were really confident enough to move forward on their own. Several had even changed their group names; an example was one

group who had chosen “Women’s Power Group” rather than “Dalit and Adivasi Women’s Forum” – and who can blame them!

The real sadness, apart from the natural ending of a project, was that it was felt there had not been enough time to reflect on the process and achievements of the project, and to work out what lessons could be learnt and how they could be applied. It was felt that for this extraordinary project to just disappear into the records would be a shocking waste, that there was so much which could be learnt from it, and usefully applied to work elsewhere. We were very fortunate that the Big Lottery allowed us to use the outstanding balance to extend the work for six months, which enabled, amongst other things, the writing of this report. The time to reflect has been invaluable, and we hope that it will bear fruit in the funding of future work.

## **B.15. RECOMMENDATIONS**

As has been mentioned, we were fortunate that the Big Lottery agreed to allow us to use the outstanding balance. This, with additional help from IVDT, has meant that we are able to carry out a Barefoot Lawyers Follow-up Project, which would have been the recommendations arising from the Barefoot Lawyers Project:

The BAREFOOT LAWYERS FOLLOW-UP PROJECT aims to:

- 1) Carry out a deep evaluation of the BAREFOOT LAWYERS Project which will involve: project description, outcomes and impact assessment through project records and meetings, consultations, interviews and workshops with stakeholders, evidence-gathering; to be carried out over three months by Director.
- 2) Produce a Project Handbook. This is intended to provide a guide to any organisation or project which might to replicate the valuable work of BAREFOOT LAWYERS. It will cover the processes, actions, achievements and learning, as a guide for the legal empowerment of women, enabling them to access justice, rights and basic services, contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable development. It will employ two people over three months, and will involve examining the project design and records, collecting information from participants, designing, drafting, and preparing the material for printing. The book will then be published and launched through a number of local and state workshops. The aim is that this material will provide a readymade framework and all the supporting guidance and material for any NGO or other institution to adopt the format in their own area or area of work, and thus extend the potential long-term reach of the Project.
- 3) Select episodes, songs, dramas, talks, interviews, etc., from the Community Radio programmes, and in encapsulated form, prepare them so they can be accessed digitally by mobile at any time across the whole of India. This will involve the engagement of a professional to create and manage a digital platform for mobile radio using IVR and DTMF tones for access.
- 4) Provide continuing support to DAWFs (Dalit and Adivasi Women’s Forums), through training by experts and by personal guidance. In addition, provide training to women to enable them to help other villages set up groups, thus extending the project and the leadership roles of women. There will be provision for some of the Leaders to participate in exposure visits to projects, organisations and institutions elsewhere in Odisha, to build their knowledge and confidence, and to extend their horizons.
- 5) Develop potential project ideas and funding applications. It is expected that six applications will be made in this time. In addition, thought will be given to trying to develop long-term giving and relationships with potential long-term donors/funders.
- 6) Pilot a Complete GPDP (Gram Panchayat Development Plan) which will be facilitated by DAFs and their Federations in 3 Gram Panchayats. This will involve the planning and tracking of the implementation of government development schemes and programmes.



Items, 1), 2), 4), and 5) have been carried out within the six months of the Big Lottery extension period, and Items 3) and 6) are under way. Details of these are given in the BAREFOOT LAWYERS FOLLOW-UP Report, 31.12.2018, prepared for the Big Lottery and IVDT.

As an additional note, it is worth mentioning that, as a result of pursuing further funding, final approval is awaited from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for a projected due to start on 01.04.2019, for water security, rights and entitlements through women's collective action. In addition IVDT & Chale Chalo are about to submit a Concept Note to the EU for taking the BLP experience to a higher level for women's empowerment and sustainable development. The director and team are exploring more possibilities for fund-raising for further replication, sustainability and scaling up of BLP actions and impacts.

## **App. 1 - Barefoot Lawyers - An Amazing Project (Stakeholders' Views)**

The three-year funding of the Big Lottery-funded Barefoot Lawyers Project ended on 30 June, 2018. At the early stages of this project we had all felt very daunted because three years seemed far too short a time to achieve what we wanted. However, we have managed to do everything planned, and more. This is partly because of the way in which we work, the years of experience of our partner, and their deep knowledge of the area. It has been an amazing project. The following are some of the comments that have been received at the District and State Level Project Sharing Workshops.

### **Mr. Hiralal Mishra, Coordinator, Palli Alok Pathagar (an NGO), Bolangir (during BLP learning sharing workshop)**

"As a general practice we attend programs on themes and events organized by NGOs during a project period and had never attended any program at the end of a project like – "project learning report sharing workshop" with beneficiaries, women forums' leaders, CSOs, PRIs, government officials, justice and service providers, media and other key stakeholders. The project reports, case studies, presentations, experiences & learning sharing and testimonials presented by the beneficiaries, women leaders and other stakeholders involved in the project are the proof of articulation, transparency and effectiveness in participatory project designing & planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation. We are very pleased to attend this learning sharing workshop and heard the voices of beneficiaries and other stakeholders directly on a project that has transferred their lives and situations much better than earlier."

### **Ms. Khyanaprava Panigrahi, Welfare Extension Officer, Khariar Block Office, Dist: Nuapada (during BLP learning sharing workshop)**

"Chale Chalo has been maintaining consistency in their approach for legal empowerment of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Women. These underprivileged women once scared of PRIs, government offices and officials are now much more aware about their rights and entitlements, confident and bold to claim and get benefits meant for them. They are now able to understand the key provisions under pro-poor and pro-women laws and schemes. I personally feel now much more comfortable to interact with these women as they easily understand issues, themes and provisions. They are able to raise their voices, ask questions, make queries, argue on points, give their reasons, agree or disagree on any issues / points without any fear or pressure. We are heading towards knowledge based communities even in remotest areas and among most excluded sections through the intervention of innovative initiatives like Barefoot Lawyers Project".

**Mr. Chita Behera, Renowned RTI Activist and Policy Analyst (during BLP learning sharing workshop)**

“The books, booklets, manuals, leaflets, folders and posters covering Right to Information (RTI), National Food Security Act (NFSA), Odisha Right to Public Service Act (ORPSA), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Gram Nyayalaya Act (GNA), Basic Understanding on Indian Constitution, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, Governance and Judicial System, Free Legal Service, Prevention of Women from Domestic Violence Act, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, Right to Education, Provisions of ICDS Services, National Health Mission (NHM) provisions, Mother and Child Health Care Provisions, Pensions (Disables, Widows, Old Age, Single Women) and Housing Schemes etc have been very useful for the women leaders, activists, CSOs, PRIs, government officials, change makers and others throughout Odisha State. I heard about use of RTI in PRIs and government offices for successfully claiming and accessing entitlements. The Honourable Odisha High Court has amended its RTI Rules and made it easier for citizens to apply and access information in judicial and quasi – judicial bodies. I hope Chale Chalo will come forward to translate the RTI Rules for Judicial Bodies into Odia language, publish and distribute among the RTI activists, people’s forums and CSOs. The awareness generation materials along with couple of workshop will enable people access their needed information in different judicial courts.2

**Mrs. Lochani Majhi, Chair Person, DAWFs’ District Federation, Nuapada**

“Through our DAWFs and federations we have made door-to-door campaigns and communities meeting in identifying genuine beneficiaries for food security, pensions, work under MGNREGS and housing, water and sanitation schemes etc, bringing their denial cases to the notice of Palli Sabha, Gram Sabha, PRIs and government offices. Our women collectives with support of barefoot lawyers, community justice mentors, legal advisor and BLP team have given the voiceless scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women the required knowledge, skills, confidence and enabled to raise their problems with concern authorities and also in grievance days before district magistrate and officials and successfully achieved their entitled benefits. Because of our built on knowledge on useful laws and schemes through BLP, we have been able to use RTI, MGNREGS, NFSA, ORPSA etc, claim and access rights and entitlements by following proper procedures and approaching with concern authorities at different levels and monitor the functioning of schools, MDM, ICDS centres, job cards and works under MGNREGS, food security cards and food grains under NFSA, water & sanitation works, roads construction, ponds digging, electricity connection, plantation, immunization and other health services in village health and nutrition day. All these ensured improved accountability and transparency in service delivery and quality implementation of development works. Our continuous efforts have ensured nearly 100% pensions to genuine poor elderly persons, widows, disables and single women, houses and food security to poor families in project villages. The project enabled me to be the chair person of DAWFs’ District Federation and presidium member of state tribal women federation. Recently I have received state RTI activist award for using RTI in my block and district for benefits of communities and voiceless poor and supporting other women to use RTI to claim and access their rights and entitlements.”

**Mrs. Domen Majhi, Vice Chair Person, DAWFs’ District Federation, Nuapada**

“DAWF is our great strength. We have ensured regular supply of safe drinking water in our village and GP through pipe line, which once seemed impossible and could not be achieved by our communities’ male members in spite of their best efforts for persuading the PRIs and officials for action. We have completely stopped illegal liquor sale in our village and GP and forced the drunkards not to be violent to others especially to women, children, elderly and sick

persons and to behave properly at homes and villages. The women of their families are our DAWF members and we are well aware and duty bound to prevent violence against women at homes and communities. We have been successfully and amicably resolving the family disputes through coordination with other DAWFs in other villages. Because of our strong communities' mobilization and demands for jobs under MGNREGS, we have now enough works during lean season and more importantly we have achieved the long standing demand for all weather connecting road to our village. As a DAWFs' federation leader as well as barefoot lawyer, I have learned and used the knowledge and skills for properly raising and addressing the denial cases. All the vulnerable persons and families in my village have been categorically supported and included for accessing eligible poverty reduction and social welfare schemes and basic services. They have been supported for taking administrative and legal measures for grievance redress and addressing rights and justice denial cases."

**Ms. Jyoti Priya Jagat, Former Team Member, BLP**

"Being a dalit destitute single woman parent I had lost hope to live. My joining in Barefoot Lawyers Project as facilitator has given me a new lease of life. I was very depressed with my mountain burden of sorrows, preferring to be silent and unable to interact with people. The intensive training provided to team on all aspects of project, rights, entitlements and laws related to very existence of life and livelihood of marginalized people especially of SC/ST women had brought back the purpose of life not only for me but also thousands of women belonging to my dalit communities and also tribal and other deprived communities who have historically been victims of discrimination, deprivation, denial and injustice. I have been a complete changed woman now after working three years in this amazing blessed project with full of positive spirit, vigour, understanding of problems, functional legal knowledge and skills to deal with the problems and purpose in life to do goods for others suffering due to poverty and injustice. The project has enabled me to apply and get a decent house, food security card and regular food grains for me and my child being a destitute dalit woman. I have also filed case for legal separation and diverse and compensation for me and my child from my husband. Once unable to speak a single word in staff meeting, now speaking hours for marginalized people especially for women, dalits, tribals, destitute, widows, elderly persons and disables and actively participating in Palli Sabha, Gram Sabha, delegation to PRIs and government offices and meetings organized by CSOs and government. We the SC/ST women are very much indebted to BLP and will remain so for ever for infusing so much confidence among us with required knowledge and skills to deal with our issues, access to justice and rights, raise voice against discrimination, actively participate in decision making process and promote inclusive development in the region."