Swaayam

Women’s Social, Economic and Political Empowerment in Jaunpur, Mirzapur and Sant Ravidas Nagar of Uttar Pradesh

Millennium Development Goals:
Goal 1 - Eradicate Extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women

Targets:
• Halve, the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
• Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people
• Increase the proportion of seats held by women in the Parliament

Relevant India Development Goals:
Reduction in the head count ratio of consumption poverty by 10 percentage points; Raising Sex Ratio in 0-6 age group to 935 by 2012 and to 950 by 2016-17; Ensuring that at least 33 percent of beneficiaries of all government schemes are women and girl children

Background

Uttar Pradesh is India’s most populous state with a population of 166 million. Poverty is widespread with 59 million living below the poverty line. The state also ranks second lowest on the Gender Empowerment Index representing high inequality between men and women.

The carpet belt of eastern Uttar Pradesh, where the project is located, once contributed over 80 percent of India’s carpet exports. It brought together a constellation of manufacturers, sub-contractors and artisans to the area. However, amidst these opportunities, lie strong economic pressures that often lead to child labour practices and social impediments. Women’s subjugation and discrimination is widespread and particularly visible amongst people belonging to socially marginalized groups such as the Muslims and Scheduled Caste women.

With the diminishing productivity of livelihoods such as agriculture and animal husbandry, poverty in the project districts is higher than the national average. It is estimated that over 40 percent of the households in the project area live below the official poverty line. Women, in particular, do not have access to or control over, the means of production. Only 18 percent participate in the workforce. Further, women account for merely 40 percent of the literate population and face restrictions in mobility and empowerment. Gender-based violence is widespread, awareness on entitlements from government welfare schemes is low and political participation is limited.

To address these impediments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) entered into a partnership with the IKEA Foundation to strengthen key dimensions of women’s empowerment — social, economic and political and reaches out to 50,000 women in 500 villages. The project carries forward the work undertaken by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the IKEA Foundation as part of a Child Rights Project (2000-2007) in the same villages.

Objectives

To ensure that women supported by the project are able to enhance incomes and
Results so far

Social Empowerment:

• Over 43,000 women are mobilized into 3,124 SHGs
• Greater enrollment of women in the National Health Insurance Scheme enabled through training of 4,000 women on the provisions of the Scheme
• 60-70 percent increase in the involvement of women in households’ decision making, particularly on issues such as children’s education, health, etc compared to the 2009 baseline

Economic Empowerment:

• 36,000 women have become entrepreneurs in five trades – dairy, incense, papadum (Indian snacks), carpet weaving and handicrafts through skill development and greater financial literacy
• Over 5,000 women have opened savings bank accounts, and half of them are now linked to insurance plans
• Registration of the first women’s dairy producer company in Uttar Pradesh with 9,000 women producers and signing of an MoU with the Cooperative Dairy Federation in the state

Political Empowerment:

• From the baseline of five, the number of women elected in the 2010 local self-government or panchayati raj institutions’ elections has gone up to 278
• Close to 20,000 women are more aware of their voting rights and political processes
• 405 Women Vigilance Committees in project villages helped communities monitor the local elections
• 100 percent increase in voter registration in some project areas enabled by mass-scale pre-election voter awareness generation campaigns

Looking to the Future

• Women-led producer companies will create greater economic space in craft, dairy and other value chains
• Skills and capacities of women will be enhanced in functional and financial literacy, entrepreneurship, leadership, legal awareness and political rights
• Roll out of capacity development programmes for elected women representatives and officials
• Expansion of Swaayam— the integrated women’s empowerment approach to 17,000 villages across four states—Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan—reaching out to 2.2 million women and their families

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The mission of the IKEA Foundation is to improve the rights and life opportunities of the many children - creating substantial and lasting change. IKEA works with UNICEF and Save the Children to promote the rights of every child to a healthy, secure childhood and access to quality education. UNDP is its partner to empower women - the key to creating a better future for children. Current IKEA Foundation projects benefit an estimated 100 million children. Websites: [www.IKEA.com](http://www.IKEA.com) and [www.undp.org.in](http://www.undp.org.in)