



Institution building for collectivization & empowerment



The Fight Hunger First Initiative has worked on a mission to empower communities, especially women. Under the project a plethora of systems, structures and Best Practices were created in the operational areas. Local institutions have the capability to sustain these efforts beyond project life.

The project FHF I however did not create any new institutions and only focussed on identifying, reviving and strengthening the existing ones that were either created by non-government

organizations or under the government schemes such as the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). At the heart of the institution building efforts was the strengthening of the Self-Help Groups.

Institution Building Statistics in FHF I Areas

Total no. of institutions **841**

Villages covered **275**

Direct beneficiaries reached **17029**

Households that are connected to institutions **18107**

An empowered SHG transformed into an invaluable resource. This resource can be effectively utilised to strengthen other important institutions like Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNC), School Management Committees (SMC) and, Forest protection Committees, among others. Many SHGs also came together to form Block Level Federation which has an enhanced level of presence and operation. The federations can make the service providers more accountable, thereby creating good governance.



VHSNCs have improved intersectoral convergence and service delivery

In the Lakshampur Village of Rayagada district, the VHSNC has been strengthened in the last one year and now has the active participation of health, ICDS, panchayat and the SHG members in the monthly meetings. Through awareness generation and vigilant monitoring by VHSNC, the attendance in VHNDs and immunization coverage has increased significantly. After an examination table was donated to the AWC from the VHSNC funds, ANC is happening on a regular basis. This AWC caters to 4 villages and accessibility has been a problem for the women. The VHSNC took up the issue and got a mini AWC sanctioned and constructed through MNREGA funds, VHNDs now happen twice - once on 3rd Thursday of the month in the mini AWC and again on 4th Fridays in the main AWC. VHSNC has also provided dustbin, pole for flag hoisting and sign boards to the AWC.

Respecting the local institutional ethos and culture

'*Kutumb*' is a local institution of the Kond tribes in Odisha. The oldest woman of the village heads the Kutumb. She is revered and her decision is never questioned. Living Farms, one of FHFIs implementing partners, has, instead of creating new SHGs or other groups in these parts, chosen to strengthen the *Kutumbs* and build their capacities.

Thus, the *Kutumbs* that were essentially a social group have now been capacitated on health, nutrition and agriculture related issues with an enhanced women's participation. The *Kutumbs* have successfully played the role of a social pressure group and taken up issues like the use of mosquito net to combat malaria or other insect-borne diseases and not getting girls married before the age of 18. There are even *Kutumb Federations* today in the block.

Community Driven School Management

The Uttarkanik Madhya Vidyalay in Sabejor village of Deoghar district has a functional School Management Committee for the last 3 years. The 16 member committee includes 4 child representatives from the school cabinet. The SMC has considerable achievements to its credit ranging from installation of a water tank, improving the menu and quality of mid day meals to purchase of tables and chairs for the school. It has mandated a competitive bidding process for vendors providing school uniforms. The SMC has also streamlined the supply chain logistics which has ensured timely procurement of groceries for MDM and books for the students.



The Nayi Roshni SHG Federation:- A beacon of light and inspiration

1 block, 50 villages, 100 SHGs, 8 clusters, 2000 members and 60 lakhs as savings : The *Mahasangh* (SHG federation) is indeed a force to reckon with. It has evolved in-to a powerful advocacy group in the block and is always at the forefront, taking up and resolving issues like inaccuracies in THR or the PDS supply. Whether it is counselling mothers to feed colostrum to their babies or performing skits on health and nutrition at the local *Kisan Mela* (Farmers Fair), the dynamic women of the *Mahasangh* are ready and raring to go. The groups has taken the lead to organize nutrition camps across the block and ensure supply of eggs to children in AWCs and schools.



“The parents are very happy with all the improvements that have happened in the school and due to this enrollment has gone up from 50 to 252 students over the last three years. - Bisheshwari Devi, SMC member.



“Earlier whenever there was a problem in the AWC I had no one to turn to for help. Now with the help of the VHSNC, we are all able to collectively discuss the matter and find solutions., Sarmistha Raj, Anganwadi Worker.

Most significant outputs of Institutions building

- Increased participation of women indecision making and utilization of resources by women for food security and nutrition
- Several issues are taken up and resolved by CBOs and SHGs and VHSNCs by flagging it in gram sabha and at block and district levels such as - dysfunctional AWC, irregular PDS, non-issuance of BPL cards and non-issuance of MNREGA funds
- 930 SMC members received training and prepared School Development Plans (SDPs) following which separate toilets for girls and boys were constructed, kitchen gardens were developed, MDM quality has improved and hand washing has been ensured - in Sonaraythari Block of Jharkhand
- 75% attendance in AWCs and 83% attendance in schools - across all project villages

The Nayi Roshni SHG Federation

“We started out as SHGs and for five years were only doing loaning and repaying activities and managed to get out of the grip of money lenders”, **Shakuntala devi, President of the Mahasangh.** “SHGs of 4 to 5 villages then came together to form clusters. This gave us the strength to take on and resolve many issues. We protested against PDS centers that did not provide accurate measures and won. We took on people who wanted to destroy our forests and stopped them”, **Geeta Devi, Member of SHG.** “Earlier mothers used to feed newborns *Bakri doodh (Goats milk)* and throw away the *Kirsa doodh (colostrum)* and we changed this. We also changed the practice of newborns being bathed. Now they only wipe them and bath is given after 5 days”, **Jhuleka Biwi.** “We performed a skit at the Kissan Mela (Farmers Fair) on the importance of ANC check up. We organized Nutrition Camps and convinced mothers to bring the under nourished children”, **Kamli Devi.**

“We have bigger dreams for the future *Palash tree cultivation, setting up a sanitary napkin production unit, eliminating the liquor mafia, to establish linkages with government schemes and markets*” - **Patrika Devi, Secretary of the Mahasangh.**

Scale up, replication and sustainability

The formation of Self Help Group Federation is the most important step towards scale-up and sustainability of the SHGs. With a net savings of 50 to 60 lakhs of rupees, many of the federations in the operational areas have started thinking of having their own ventures and small scale companies. Alongside they also take up health and nutrition issues and other social causes. The FHFI's experience of facilitating the formation of clusters and federation and linking them to various Government schemes and programmes has ensured their sustainability in the long run.

The NRLM has already started the process. The exposure of the SHGs to LANN has created a new vision and supported the groups and individual women to plan income generation and utilization of money in a more nutrition sensitive manner. Once the NRLM groups become strong and go through the LANN PLA trainings, they will be able to ensure that VHSNCs, SMC, Mata Committees, Forest Protection Committees, Gram Sabha and all other community based organizations are functioning actively.

Cost of intervention

Good Practice	Number per village	unit cost	Cost sharing and Linkages	Responsibility
Institution building- SHG/VHSNC/ SMC	Existing village committees and groups	Nil	NRLM, H&FW, Education dept.	DRDC- NRLM/ SRLM and Panchayat