Gender integration and mainstreaming

INTRODUCTION

Women’s collectives carry huge potential in transforming women’s lives by providing them opportunities beyond economic well-being and contributing to their socio-political empowerment. My host organisation collaborated with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), India’s flagship poverty alleviation program to support creating a gender operational strategy and mainstreaming gender across all its verticals. I was roped in for a Gender Resource Centre Pilot project that aimed to institutionalize and scale up tested approaches to gender integration and transformation using women’s federations structure under NRLM. Working within a well designed Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for this project, I made an initial contribution to an Ethnographic Research Study that aims to track context-specific incremental changes in women’s lives.

Parallely, I worked to redesign the training curriculum from a gender lens for one of the NRLM verticals and also contributed to a Process and Outcome Evaluation study on the implementation of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Act, 2013. While redesigning the training curriculum, I realized the ‘subtle ways’ through which gender stereotypes are reinforced in our writings, conversations, and illustrations and shared my reflections on the curriculum by integrating gender components and ensured there exist no gender biases.

“I have always wondered—How will an ideal society that we dream of look like and what would it take to build that society? This has been an unsettling question within me for years and a driving force to transit from Engineering to Social Science. Further, conducting research studies in semi-urban and rural settings, helped me understand the challenges faced by different marginalized social groups.”

Every constraint is an opportunity if dealt with an open mind
Finding yourself in others’ stories

INTRODUCTION

Prajwala Sangham works on gender and caste sensitisation, using art and theatre as their primary methodologies. During my Fellowship period, I conducted programmes with school children from marginalised backgrounds, children in orphan homes and women from urban slums.

Due to the virtual nature of the Fellowship, I also worked on reporting and documentation processes, scaling social media communications and funding opportunities. I took the lead in designing three major project proposals, chiefly on—Dalit arts and culture, child rights and child development and empowerment of urban slum women. Brainstorming ideas for activities—from residential artist retreats to academic seminars— and then fine-tuning these as per the needs and sentiments of the community, was a memorable learning experience.

I also worked on the website design for Prajwala’s ‘Chinuku’ initiative and created strategic plans and timelines for their social media pages. I was fortunate enough to co-facilitate a few online sessions with the school and orphan children, and these were some of the most meaningful interactions of my Fellowship.

“A nine-year old school girl during a session on gender stereotypes threw this question at us — ‘I was angry when my friend was scolded for wearing a skirt. Why are we being scolded for our clothes when boys can wear whatever they want to and go outside and play?’ For girls growing up in India, judgements on what we can and cannot wear are commonplace and, by the time I had reached my early twenties, I too had begun to internalise these norms. The fiery anger in this young girl’s voice shook me out of my state of resigned acceptance and reinvigorated my resolve to challenge the patriarchal control over women’s bodies.”

Theatre helped me overcome my inhibitions

With the help of regular playback theatre sessions, Amiya built on her creativity and confidence. She learnt that with the right amount of research, support and preparedness, no task is too difficult to complete. During the Fellowship, she realised that social progress happens through change in mindsets of people which often manifest in barely perceptible ways.
Struggle brings progress

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has reinforced the proverb, "health is wealth". My project, 'Sampurna Barta' implemented by Seba Jagat supported by UNICEF; aims to reduce MMR and IMR by ensuring quality of health services and promoting health, hygiene and sanitation, by engaging with multiple stakeholders like Front Line Health workers, district hospital and local administration. Local indigenous communities are important stakeholders in a project and my role was to find their vision of development, their felt needs and facilitating collective problem solving through participatory methods. For my host organization, I conducted capacity building sessions for staff on scheduling virtual meetings, mobile photography, prepared case study formats, and documented project activities through videos and photo essays.

“I was grateful to visit a hard-to-reach village in Kalahandi, and meet the tribal community. I was apprehensive if I could communicate with them, if they would open up to me. An adventurous ride on the steep hills led me to the beautiful Gram Panchayat of Dedhsuli. I built a rapport after attending the Sunday mass in the village church. Later, I observed the people had neither toilets nor tap water. During transect walk, I went to the lone water spring where women washed clothes, utensils and filled pots for drinking. We learnt that their biggest concern was having a rice mill as otherwise the women spent five hours every morning de-husking rice. My Host Organisation and the Community Resource Person conveyed this to the government representatives who agreed to allocate a rice mill in the next village planning drive. This small development deepened my faith in our collective potential to bring about change.”

FACILITATED PARTICIPATORY METHODS WITH 112 COMMUNITY MEMBERS
HELD WORKSHOPS ON REPRODUCTIVE AND MENSTRUAL HEALTH WITH 77 ADOLESCENT GIRLS.
TRAINED 25 MEMBERS OF HOST ORGANISATION
DID 12 HOME VISITS WITH FRONTLINE WORKERS
MADE 6 VIDEOS ON PROJECT ACTIVITIES
Energy efficient business models are the way to go

Promoting energy efficient business models in industry

INTRODUCTION

My role at ISC endeavoured to accelerate the adoption of energy-efficient technologies in Asia through innovative business models and financing approaches. For instance, ISC & EESL (Government of India), have been successful in deploying the innovative demand aggregation ESCO-based model for different products and launched the National Motor Replacement Program aimed at replacing conventional inefficient motors with energy-efficient IE3 motors and bringing down the cost of IE3 motors through aggregating demand and offering affordable finance.

For regional dissemination and replication of these models, I strived to carve inroads into paving the way forward for industrial energy efficiency (EE) in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Towards that end, I conducted an opportunities assessment of the industrial EE landscape in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia through primary stakeholder conferences and research. The consultations offered valuable insights about the grassroots challenges and opportunities for implementing solutions to drive the energy transformation in the region. Taking such learnings forward, I engaged with key stakeholders through focus group discussions to create prospects for B2B approaches, lay foundations for project working groups and formulate the scope for collaborative interventions.

I also worked towards building the capacities of industrial units and ESCOs in India, with the objective of incentivising MSMEs and upscaling EE projects by leveraging the network of mini-ESCOs and private financing institutes through market-based business models that can be replicated and benefited to the MSME sector in India.

“My Fellowship project has given me an opportunity to understand the critical nuances within the space of climate resilience through the combined all-encompassing lenses of society, economics and environment. It enabled me to explore the sector of climate sustainability, keeping in mind the barriers faced and opportunities that may be leveraged by each key stakeholder in the ecosystem. Today, standing here and navigating the uphill road ahead - I acknowledge that one’s resilience is endless when it leverages the power of reliance.”

MEHAR JAUHAR
Climate Sustainability, Innovation & Technology

With a resilient motivation for service and a never-ending faith in humanity, Mehar hopes to endlessly continue the pursuit of compassion and perseverance. Stronger than before, with a deeper drive to be better as she grows, Mehar promises to do more than her part in enabling the unconditional truth of the equality of being, the harmony of nature and the kindness of peace.
Sustainable strategies for a green and gender equal society

INTRODUCTION

Srijan Foundation aims to improve the quality of lives of vulnerable women and children through means of sustainable agriculture. Their initiative, Farmer Field School, a learning-cum-training centre, with the help of community mobilizers trains about 5000 women farmers on using climate-resilient farming methods.

The project I was placed with, focused on working with women farmers in Hazaribag and West Singhbhum districts of Jharkhand. I developed strategic initiatives to inform women farmers about various models and organic farming. This was to increase production and ensure household-level food and nutrition security through better income and livelihood opportunities. My role involved research, strategic planning, creative and proposal writing, visual content development and facilitating sessions on documentation and design. I also created a virtual drive to locate nearly every project resource with few clicks.

“Design is an art of understanding, cognition and expression. This starts with a simple mistake and travels to being a silent ambassador of innovation. On the project front, the field visits for observing sustainable agriculture practices, focus group discussions with women farmers to co-create ideas and lending support in review meetings, gave me immense insights to match with my responsibilities and shared goals.”

SHASHI KUMAR
Livelihoods

Shashi is a strategic social development consultant who is immensely passionate about working in the space of public policy, from its formulation to implementation. Being a Communication practitioner, he strongly believes in the power of storytelling and social documentaries to transform the lives in the Indian context, especially those in the rural segments of the nation.

Jharkhand

From focus group discussions to strategies
Rehabilitation and reformation for prison inmates

INTRODUCTION

In all, I worked on four projects during the course of the Fellowship, with three being completely led by me. I was able to contribute to the rehabilitation and reformation project conducted in conjunction with the India Vision Foundation.

For the first time, I visited the prison in Bhondsi, Gurgaon where we did workshops on preventing gender-based violence with topics such as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), sexual consent, domestic violence, dowry, and power dynamics. This was an immensely enriching and insightful experience for me. In the second project, I helped in designing a monitoring and evaluation toolkit with case studies and surveys to assess various topics on gender-based violence.

The third project which was completely led by me, was on desk research, and entailed collating and cataloguing over 100+ organizations working in the area of gender-based violence and reaching out to them for potential partnerships.

"I understood my own resilience by working with communities and varied stakeholders."

SHIVRANJANI GANDHI Livelihoods

Shivranjani is sensitive, empathetic, curious, and anticipating yet, trying to live in the moment. Being a social and cultural psychologist by training, she has developed a deep inclination towards several social and contemporary issues that can be researched and solved at an interdisciplinary level. She is passionate about causes from life situations that have impacted her personally, while she is holding space for others and learning how to best support them in their life journeys.

The Fellowship gave me a taste of local realities
Making inroads for digitalising an indigenous museum

INTRODUCTION

My project was a strategic initiative dedicated to designing a roadmap for an indigenous museum based in rural Gujarat. It was all about the myriad processes that go behind making a museum ready for visitors. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, I focused on improving digital accessibility and ensuring a wider reach of the museum. My role in the project was to conduct research, document successful case studies and strategies implemented by various museums around the world, conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders, focus on ways to build capacity amongst museum curators at Bhasha, and make a comprehensive plan for the future of the museum.

I read on past collaborations, event reports, past projects, and secondary literature. Subsequently, I conducted in-depth interviews of various colleagues at the organisation and did fieldwork to understand the local demographic and spatial importance of museum’s geographic location. It was in this context, that I understood the need for digital accessibility of Vaacha Museum which is part of the Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh. Through this research, I proposed recommendations and an action plan that would enable ‘Vaacha’ to step into the virtual space effectively and systematically increase its outreach and build new networks.

“During my fieldwork, I learnt resilience from one of the museum curators when he narrated his journey of starting as a daily wage labourer working in an urban space far away from his home to finding his role in the museum as a curator who narrates the history of his own community. This shift in his life also marked the emergence of ‘Bhasha’ as an organisation and its subsequent projects like the Adivasi Academy in Tejgadh which the museum is part of. As a young professional, this was highly inspirational and something that I consider a success story.”
Bringing a gender perspective to a government system

INTRODUCTION

As part of my Fellowship I got the opportunity to work on several meaningful projects with long term impacts on my host community. I created a Gender Mainstreaming report for the Ministry of Education of the Government of Tibet which included a Gender Mainstreaming Checklist, created in accordance with the gender checklists developed by the United Nations. This checklist was distributed to all employees of the department and based on the results, gender sensitization trainings were conducted.

Further in the project, I developed an activity-based gender education curriculum for all students in Tibetan schools across India. I founded the project and it will start in earnest soon. I also formulated the idea of Tibetan entrepreneurs imparting experience-based knowledge on Entrepreneurship (as per the NCERT curriculum) through a video format. I developed the plan and laid the foundation for video-based learning of the NCERT Entrepreneurship curriculum in Tibetan schools across India. As my supervisor said, “After your Fellowship, when you visit a Tibetan school and see these projects running, you should feel a sense of pride in knowing that you made this possible.”

“While I gained professional success during my Fellowship project, what impacted me the most was more of a personal nature. I consider my greatest success in this Fellowship project to be the relationships that I have been able to create and nurture with the people in my host community and host organization. From the President of Tibet, who researched about my education and work prior to our meeting, to the Education Minister, who made it a point to interact with me at length outside of office, to my colleagues at the Education Ministry who made sure that I was included in every single activity within and outside of work, to the many Tibetan friends I made in the marketplace in my host city who were kind enough to open their homes and hearts to me and share their deepest thoughts and most personal stories with me - I felt loved.”

100% OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF THE TIBETAN GOVERNMENT WERE GENDER SENSITIZED THROUGH 15 DIVERSE SESSIONS
3 RESEARCH REPORTS, 2 LARGE SCALE KNOWLEDGE DATABASE AND 2 BASELINE SURVEYS GENERATED
2 LARGE-SCALE CURRICULA DEVELOPED ON GENDER EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR ALL TIBETAN SCHOOLS ACROSS INDIA
25 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED; AND 200 STUDENTS AND 100 SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS SURVEYED
REPRESENTED THE HOST COMMUNITY AND SPOKE ABOUT THEIR ISSUES AT A UNICEF USA EVENT IMPACTING 500+ PEOPLE ACROSS 7 COUNTRIES AND 5 CONTINENTS
PRESENTED THE FELLOWSHIP PROJECT WORK TO TIBET’S FORMER AND NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENTS

Immersing myself in the service of the Tibetan community

As an INTJ personality type (Introverted, Intuitive, Thinking, and Judging), Shivangi identifies with the stereotype of the reclusive writer dealing with crippling self-doubt and on a perpetual spiritual quest. Through her transformational Fellowship journey she overcame many challenges to earn the title of the ‘Most Popular Person’ in her workplace.
My entry into the public health domain

INTRODUCTION

My programme – ‘eArth Swasthya’, focused on increasing identification of TB cases in five Panchayats in Kishanganj district of Bihar and improving the testing rates for same in partnership with the local health administration. I was involved in strategizing, coordinating and implementing the health programs on Tuberculosis and COVID-19. I was also involved in content creation, designing and facilitating capacity building sessions on English language, digital literacy and other health topics for the local team. Further, I designed and facilitated awareness and training workshops for the local communities on Tuberculosis and COVID-19. My role also involved working on partnerships and creating a database of future potential partners for my host organization.

Once the second wave of the pandemic struck and going to the field was not a safe option, my host organization’s priority, along with my project, shifted to COVID-19 relief efforts. I helped in launching “the rations for vaccine” campaign to improve the vaccination rates. Through this initiative, our aim was to increase the vaccination rates amongst the daily wage workers in our area through this campaign.

“During a workshop on TB, I got the opportunity to explain how to use a microscope to kids. While showing them a picture of the microscope, the glow and curiosity in the kids’ eyes were immensely satisfying to watch. Later, the kids came to me and revealed that it was their first time seeing a microscope. Knowing that I introduced them to an object that they had never seen before while explaining to them its uses, was extremely heart-warming for me.”

Tonmoy envisions a society where everyone has access to equal opportunities to improve one’s quality of life. The Fellowship has shown him the power of empathy in changing age-old perspectives. A big Assamese at heart, Tonmoy wishes to implement the learning obtained from the Fellowship towards developing his homeland.

Got a panoramic view of complexities in health sector

1. STRATEGIZED AND MANAGED 6+ RATION DISTRIBUTION DRIVES THAT REACHED 2000+ PEOPLE
2. DESIGNED AND FACILITATED AWARENESS GENERATION WORKSHOPS ON TB AND COVID-19
3. CONDUCTED 2 WORKSHOPS ON TB AND COVID-19
4. 5+ CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS FOR THE LOCAL TEAM DESIGNED AND FACILITATED
5. 10+ SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS CREATED RAISING INR 2.75 LAKHS AS OF 11TH JUNE
6. CREATED A PARTNER DATABASE OF 8 POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Project Potential

Bihar
Enlarging the gender spectrum in the Tibetan diaspora

INTRODUCTION

I was placed at the Women’s Empowerment Desk (WED) at CTA (Central Tibetan Administration). The function of the WED team is to implement the Women’s Empowerment Policy (revised 2017) passed by the Cabinet of CTA for attaining gender equality.

My project had different aspects of gender I was working on, which was both an incredible learning experience and a chance to fully utilize my skills and capacities in this field. For the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) research study, I developed a survey for 1500 respondents across the settlements, conducted qualitative interviews with key persons, trained field officers, analysed data and produced a report summarising the findings to help future policy making.

For Gender Mainstreaming (GM), I analysed the cause behind the gap between theory and implementation of the GM Framework. This I learnt was chiefly the lack of accountability and clarity on step-by-step adaptation of the framework in individual projects. To tackle the first, I developed a GM Compliance Checklist and for the second, I undertook practical implementation of the framework on an individual project. As for the Helpline, I learnt new skills for social media outreach and helped in content creation. Moreover, trainings introduced me to the community’s gender perspectives and discourse.

“The call for gender equality is a common thread running through almost all communities, however, working with CTA made me realize that everyone’s idea of equality may not necessarily be coherent. The complex organizational structure and unique context of the Tibetan people have largely shaped the community’s ideas and priorities in life. Freedom being the foremost driving force, it was interesting and challenging working for gender empowerment within this reality. Different approaches and understanding the community context is of utmost importance for bringing about any social change. The resilience, peace and warmth that I observed and imbibed while working here will definitely help me in the long run.”

LED THE RESEARCH STUDY ON SGBV WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WITH 1500 RESPONDENTS AND 20 FIELD OFFICERS
CREATED AN INSTITUTION WIDE GENDER MAINSTREAMING COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST
CONDUCTED A PILOT GENDER ANALYSIS AND INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT FOR THE TELEPSYCHIATRY PROJECT
ASSISTED IN INCREASING TIBETAN WOMEN’S HELPLINE’S OUTREACH
CONDUCTED A PILOT IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CHECKLIST WITH THE NON-BANKING FINANCIAL CORPORATION OR NBFC

TRISHLA BAFNA
Gender

Trishla Bafna is a curious, quirky feminist who loves to read, write and dance. The Fellowship has made her delve even deeper into the complexities and intersectionality of gender and societal norms affecting communities. Patience and courage to keep asking difficult questions has been a part of her professional and personal growth during the course of this journey.

Discussing gender in a totally different culture

Women’s Empowerment Desk, Social and Resource Development Fund (SARD), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)
Shaishav works with underprivileged children living in the marginalized communities in Bhavnagar through gender sensitization and life skills programs. Shaishav has formed ‘Balsena’ groups (children’s collectives) across 20 such marginalized communities. My Fellowship project at Shaishav focused on three major components: designing, implementing and assessing activities for the Balsena program, for which I designed more than 30 life skills modules and 25 sports activities. I also developed a broad curriculum framework for ‘Aaranyakshala’, an alternative space for tribal children in Narmada district as well as instilling life skills and play among children.

In the early days, when I moved to my host organization, I found it challenging to effectively communicate the activities to ‘Balsena’ children because of the language barrier. However, I soon realized that the sessions were attended by children of mixed age groups. So, I first briefed the activity to older children who understood Hindi, they in turn explained the instructions to the larger group. In the sessions which required children to work in small batches, I ensured the formation of mixed age groups because I thought peer learning would benefit younger children both during the activity as well as reflection time. The peer led approach helped me bridge the language barrier and also provided older children with the possibility to develop leadership skills.”