

A woman wearing an orange sari is smiling and looking to her right. A colorful patterned cloth is draped over her left shoulder. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

Impact Assessment Report

Project Shakti

**RESULTS OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN
THREE VILLAGES OF MEHSANA BLOCK,
MEHSANA DISTRICT, STATE OF GUJARAT**



McCain Foods India Private Limited

and

Arupa Mission Research Foundation



This document tells the story of change that has taken place in the three years of Project Shakti being implemented in Mehsana block. The document highlights the progress made through need-based interventions, participatory methods introduced, as well as identifies areas that need further follow up and progress.

Team Project Shakti

Table of Contents

Chapter1 Introduction	1
1.1 Project Shakti Goals, Objectives and Expected Outcomes	2
1.1.1 Goal	2
1.1.2 Objectives.....	2
1.1.3 Expected Outcome	3
1.2 Mehsana district.....	4
Chapter2 Data and Methodology	9
Chapter3 Results	12
3.1 Household Characteristics.....	12
3.2 Gender Role Perspective	15
3.3 Child Marriage Status.....	20
3.4 Mobility.....	24
3.5 Change leaders to accelerate change in the lives of women and girls.....	25
3.6 Time Spent on Traditional Economic Activities	25
3.7 Financial Empowerment	26
3.7.1 Training and Capacity building.....	28
3.7.2 Awareness about Various Schemes	29
3.8 Self Help Group and Livelihood Generation.....	30
3.9 Decision Making	39
3.10 Good Governance Practices	41
3.10.1 Absence of Gender Sensitive and Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plans 41	
3.10.2 Participation of women in Gram Panchayat Activities and Gram Sabha .43	
3.10.3 Absence of Village Health and Sanitation Committee	43
3.10.4 Involvement of women in SHGs for development of villages.....	43
Chapter4 Key Insights	44

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Child Sex Ratio in districts of Gujarat	4
Figure 2 Geographical pattern of child sex ratio in Gujarat	5
Figure 3 Head of the Household	12
Figure 4 Age of Marriage for Men.....	13
Figure 5 % Respondents who were married	13
Figure 6 Type of house	14
Figure 7 Source of Cooking Fuel	14
Figure 8 Attitude towards women	16
Figure 9 Changes required in Women's life reported by female respondents.....	17
Figure 10 Changes required in Women's life reported by male respondents	17
Figure 11 Changes required for increasing women's safety	18
Figure 12 Attributes for a decrease in female feticide within the villages	20
Figure 14 Attributes for the decrease in child marriages within the villages.....	23
Figure 15 Acceptable age for marriage (Boys and Girls).....	23
Figure 16 Status of access to bank accounts and its operation.....	27
Figure 17 Access to Pan card.....	28
Figure 18 Distribution of SHG members across the three villages	31
Figure 19 Women engaged in activities before SHG and after SHG	31
Figure 20 Regularity of the SHG meetings reported by the members.....	31
Figure 21 Key Activities undertaken by the SHG members.....	32
Figure 22 Reasons for joining the SHG reported by the members.....	33
Figure 23 Saving pattern across members of different age groups.....	34
Figure 24 Factors in which savings are helping SHG members	36
Figure 25 Entrepreneurial activities before and after SHG	37
Figure 26 Attitude of family members before joining the SHG.....	38
Figure 27 Attitude of the family members after joining the SHG	38
Figure 28 Major Decision Makers in a household.....	40
Figure 29 Decision on Spending on basic requirements for self	41

List of Tables

Table 1 Sample Calculations	9
-----------------------------------	---

ACRONYMS

AMRF: Arupa Mission Research Foundation

CBO: Community Based Organization

SHG: Self Help group

RSETI: Rural Self Employment and Training Institute

Chapter 1 Introduction

Project Shakti is all about empowering women and girls in every dimension of their life. Empowerment is a process of enhancing individuals' ability to make choices and transform them into desired actions and results. The project aims to help women bring positive changes in their lives through capacity building and training. Project Shakti is a part of the CSR activities of McCain Foods India Pvt. Ltd. and implemented by Arupa Mission Research Foundation (AMRF). Project Shakti has been active in Baliyasan village in Mehsana district for more than two years now and has just started operations in Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan. Before AMRF began Project Shakti in Baliyasan, there were no active SHG groups and no pro-women activities. In the initial phase, it was found, women were not allowed to move around in their village with freedom, and mobility outside the village was out of the question for them. In the first phase of the project, the focus was on empowering and enhancing the soft skills, knowledge of the women. In the intermediate phase, AMRF organized activities which would help build the confidence of the women to stand against any form of violence and formed SHGs.

Based on the success of the pilot and demand from the women of the village, Project Shakti II was initiated in the same panchayat with a larger group of women focusing on empowering women socially and economically and reducing the gender gap. Given the success of Phase II, it was decided that a scale-up would be done. In the meanwhile, in Project Shakti II, Elected Representatives and functionaries of 11 Gram Panchayats of Mehsana block were introduced to Project Shakti methodology and working on Gender Sensitive and Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plans. Out of these 11, Arupa Mission Research Foundation was invited to implement Project Shakti in 5 Gram Panchayats. Based on available funding and proximity to the McCain Plant, in addition to Baliyasan Panchayat, Ambaliyasan and Bhasariya Panchayat were selected for scaling up Project Shakti.

Project Shakti has gone through 4 Phases as of now — Phase 1 (Baliyasan), Intermediate Phase (Baliyasan), Phase 2 (Baliyasan) and Phase 3 (Baliyasan), Ambaliyasan and Bhasariya). All the phases of the project have been implemented by

Arupa Mission Research Foundation with major financial support from McCain except for the intermediate phase which was implemented and funded both by Arupa Mission Research Foundation from its SAISHAVFunds.

Activities with the support from the implementing partner were carried out to develop an enabling environment for the participating women who can adopt alternative livelihoods through micro enterprises. Girls and women were encouraged and supported to form SHG groups and initiate savings for alternative livelihoods and micro-credit activities. The focus of the project has been the strengthening of the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) such as Self-Help Group (SHG). Participation in the SHG will help the women move towards empowerment by choosing an alternative livelihood and become financially independent. This report documents the impact seen in the women who were part of the SHG and were part of its training.

1.1 Project Shakti Goals, Objectives and Expected Outcomes

1.1.1 Goal

Social change and improved livelihood through empowerment, capacity building and gender sensitization of both men and women.

1.1.2 Objectives

Economic Empowerment:

Enhance soft skills of Women and Girls to take up Vocational Skills in future so that they are employable or can be confident of being entrepreneurs in New Villages and remaining sample of phase I village

To Improve Livelihoods and Income of women and adolescent girls (Financial Empowerment) from the group identified in new villages and formation of SHGs and to strengthen women empowerment and skill development initiatives of phase I and II as such

Social Empowerment

To improve quality of lives of women and girls (Social Change and Social Empowerment) by creating interventions to improve on gender sensitization

Good Governance Practices

Natural resource initiatives to enhance livelihoods and to end gender discrimination

1.1.3 Expected Outcome

It is expected that financial empowerment of women and girls will happen in two ways- firstly, by improving their source of alternative livelihoods and by secondly, by making women and girls more employable so that they can be absorbed in upcoming industries, offices, and other institutions. This would result in women having access to available money to meet their personal needs, basic amenities as well as give support to them in bad or critical days and occasions.

On the other hand, social change would improve gender relation and reduce gender discrimination. We expect to see a reduction in child abuse and violence and violence against women with a decrease in child marriage, Improvement in the child sex ratio and improvement in the mobility of women and girls with confidence.

1.2 Mehsana district

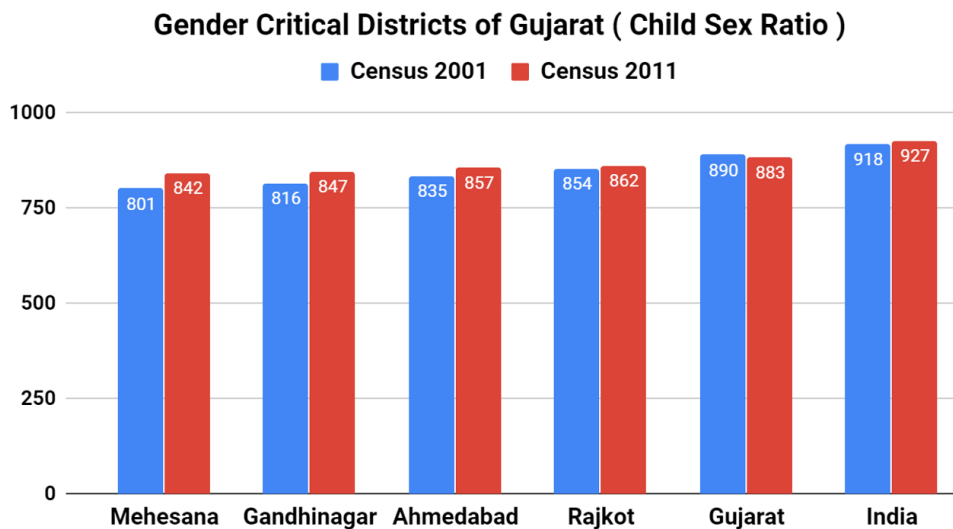


Figure 1 Child Sex Ratio in districts of Gujarat

Mehsana district belongs to the state of Gujarat, situated just above Gandhinagar district. According to Census 2011, the district has a population of about 2 million and a literacy rate of 84%. However, the district has been classified as a Gender critical district by the Women and Child Development Ministry. The child sex ratio of Mehsana is amongst the poorest in the state of Gujarat. Figure 1 shows Mehsana has a child sex ratio at 842 way below Gujarat's average of 883. Gujarat as a state has seen a reduction a child sex ratio, which is in itself a matter of concern for the state. Project Shakti started in the Baliyasan village, given its child sex ratio was at 769 in 2016 and also it directly came under the geographical vicinity of McCain' Food Production Plant. Figure 2 shows two clusters of low child sex ratio within Gujarat. Out of the two, Mehsana is at the center of one of the clusters

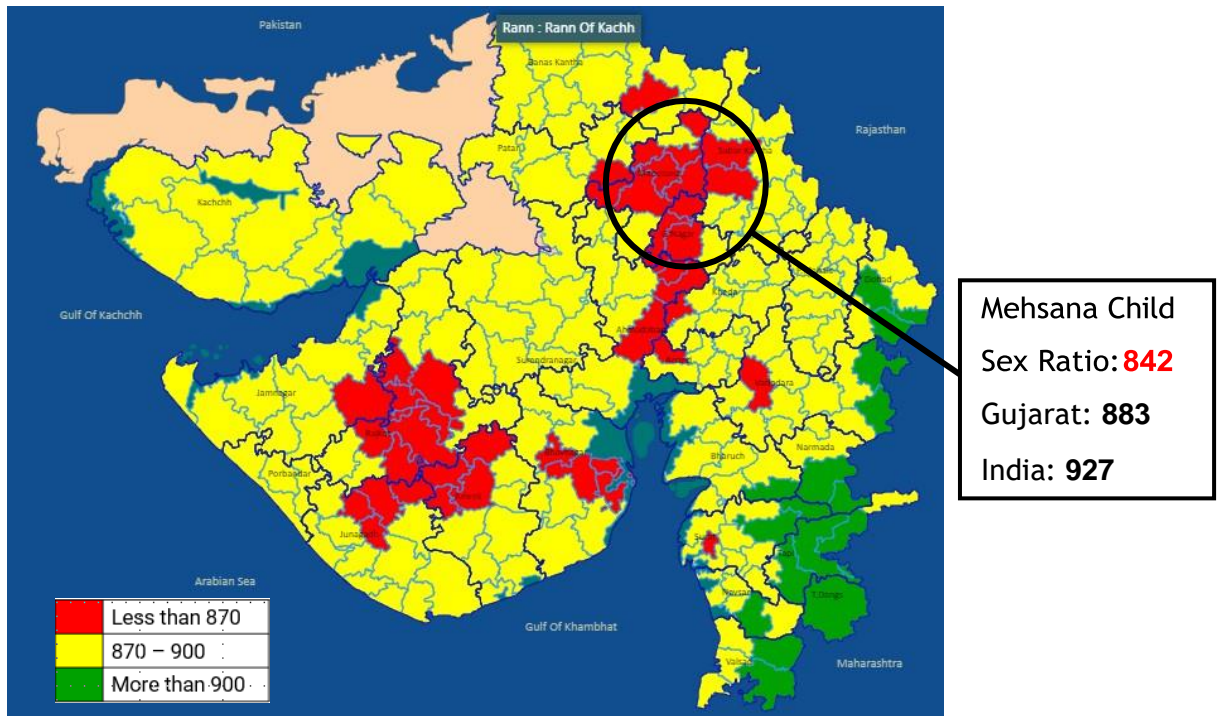
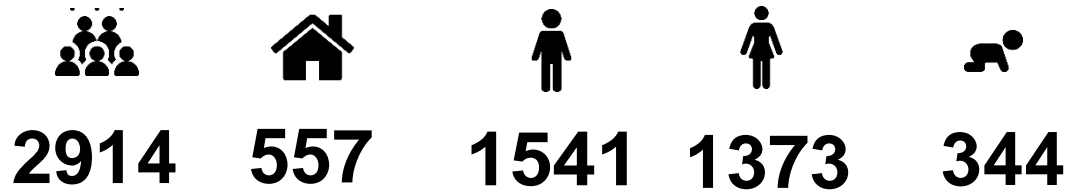


Figure 2 Geographical pattern of child sex ratio in Gujarat

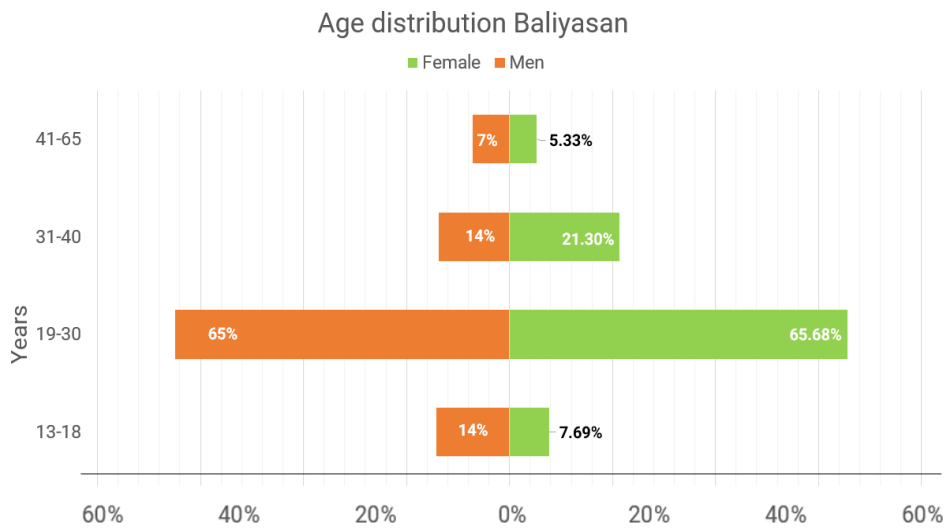
Project Shakti is implemented in 3 villages of Mehsana block of Mehsana district of Gujarat. The following section highlights village demography.

The Three Project Villages:

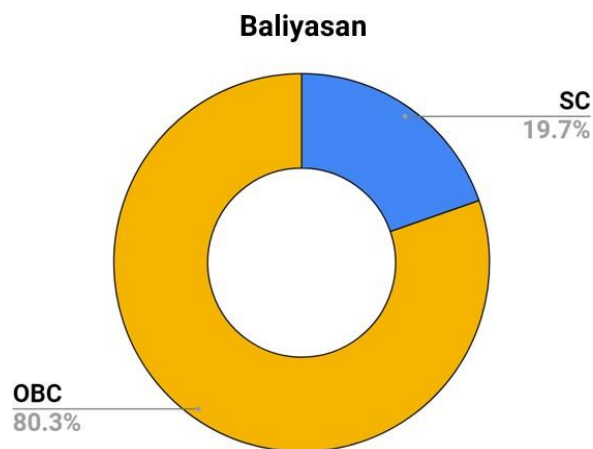
1. Baliyasan



Source: Census 2011

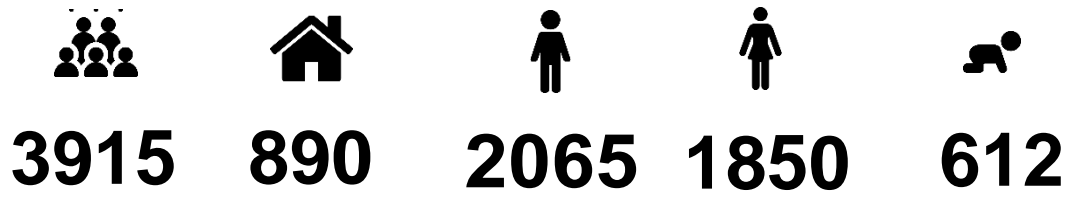


Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research

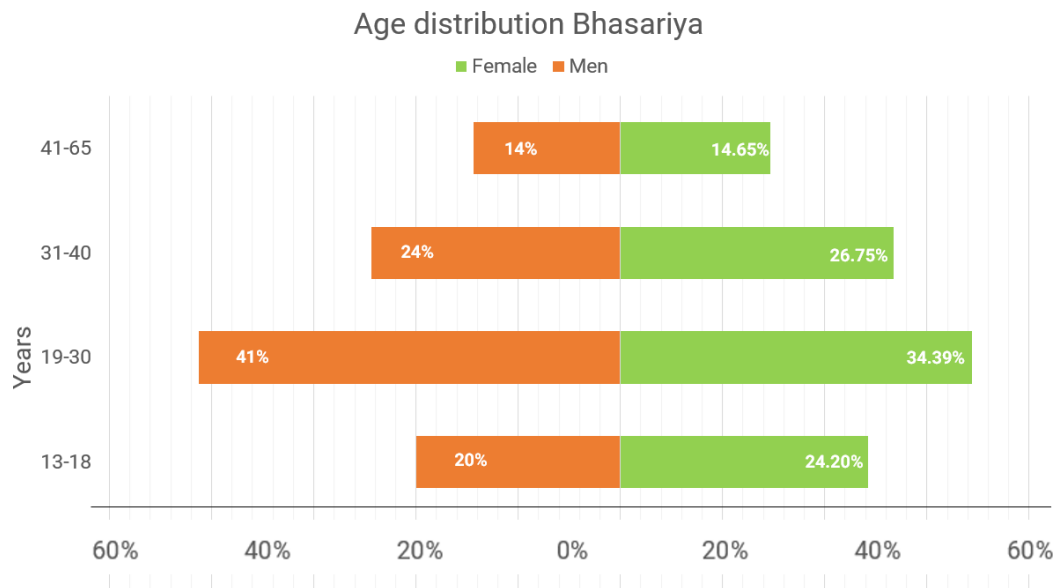


Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research

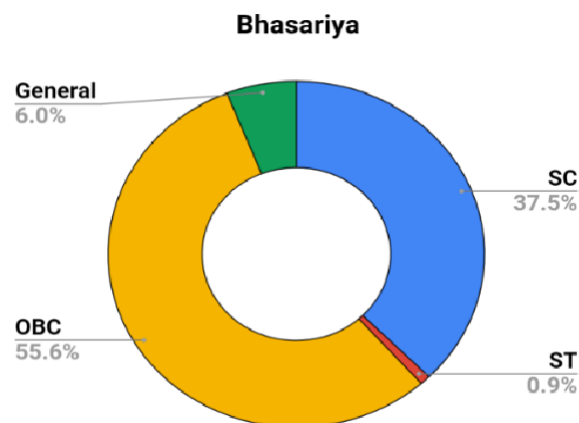
2. Bhasariya



Source: Census 2011



Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research



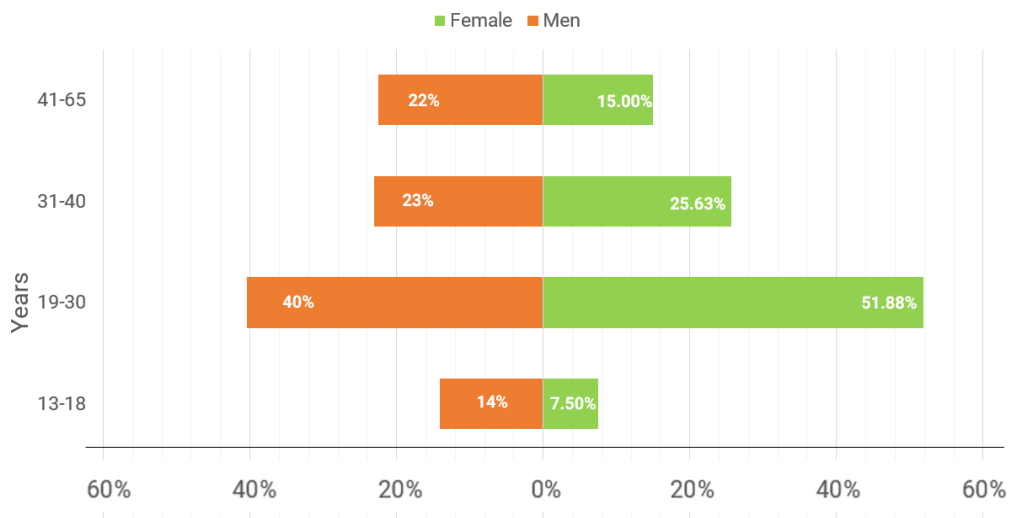
Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research

3. Ambaliyasan

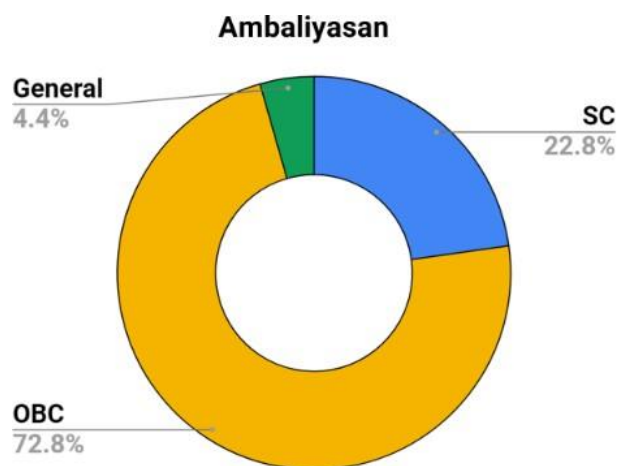


Source: Census 2011

Age distribution Ambaliyasan



Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research



Source: Project Shakti, Primary Research

Chapter 2 Data and Methodology

The impact assessment study was carried out during April 2019. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to understand the impact of Project Shakti. For the 3rd phase of Project Shakti, based on the population of the 3 villages, 95% confidence level and 5.54 confidence interval a random sample of 873 was to be the outreach and this included both male and female:

Table 1 Sample Calculations

Villages	Project Shakti Phase	Population	Estimated Sample	Actual Sample Covered
Baliyasan (Pilot Village)	I, II & III	3915	290	393
Bhasariya	III	2914	283	348
Ambaliyasan	III	7072	300	432
Total	3 Villages	13901	873	1173

During the course of implementation of Project Shakti, more people joined as SHG Members and through project activities like Health Camp, growing the total stakeholders to 1173 individuals. However, it may be noted that from the original baseline of 873, there was limited engagement with men as the activities planned were primarily for women. Further, even if they wished to associate or join the project, they could not because they mostly worked as daily wagers. Therefore, while analyzing data, a comparison has been made between baseline and impact assessment of those from the sample of 1173 who are associated with activities of Project Shakti directly and those who are part of the sample but have not associated with any activities at the same time.

An individual questionnaire was the main tool used for primary data collection. The questionnaire included topics ranging from a general background of the interviewee's household with more focus on gender issues, economic activities of women including SHG activities and perception of people on specific issues. On the other hand, in total 18 personal interviews were conducted using an in-depth questionnaire to understand the impact of Project Shakti. Case stories were developed based on the interviews with the respondent. A thematic

questionnaire was kept open-ended and dynamically updated based on the experience and responses shared by respondents. Questions about their life before and after Project Shakti were inquired into at the individual level, community level and then at last at the village level. A separate report has been developed for the same.

The Theory of Change for Project Shakti focusses on 3 Key elements which are- Social Empowerment of Women, Economic /Financial Empowerment of Women, and Good Governance Practices.

Under the Social Empowerment of Women some of the critical barriers that prevented women from being empowered were:

- i) Gender Role Perspective with regard to whether women need any kind of change in their lives
- ii) A critical child sex ratio (forced female feticide)
- iii) The practice of Child Marriage (girls made to drop out of school early so that they can practice housework and get married early) and violence at home as well as discrimination between a male and female child.
- iv) Limited Mobility of Women
- v) Need for change leaders to accelerate change in the lives of women and adolescent girls

With regard to the Economic Empowerment of Women, the barriers identified were:

- i) No or limited access to banks and no financial literacy
- ii) No alternate source of income which the women could use for themselves
- iii) Unable to make decisions with regard to how money should be spent Under

the Good Governance Practices the following barriers were identified:

- i) Absence of Gender Sensitive and Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plans
- ii) Absence participation of women in Gram Panchayat Activities and Gram Sabha
- iii) Absence of Village Health and Sanitation Committee

- iv) Absence of involvement of women in the form of SHGs for development of villages

These have been discussed under separate sections.

Chapter 3 Results

3.1 Household Characteristics

This section captures the household characteristics of the sample included in the baseline survey. Household characteristics is an important part of the data collection process, a thorough understanding of the households is a necessary condition if one wants to bring social change. Figure 3 (Source: Baseline Survey) clearly shows the presence of our patriarchal society, where maximum households are headed by a male member of the house

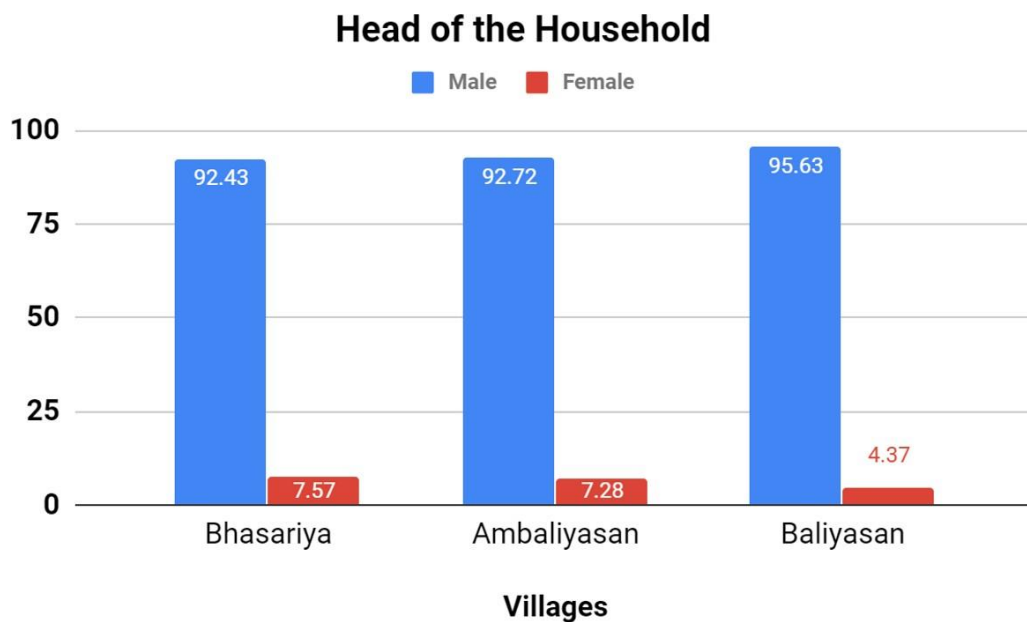


Figure 3 Head of the Household

Marriage and distribution of age at Marriage (Source: Baseline Survey)

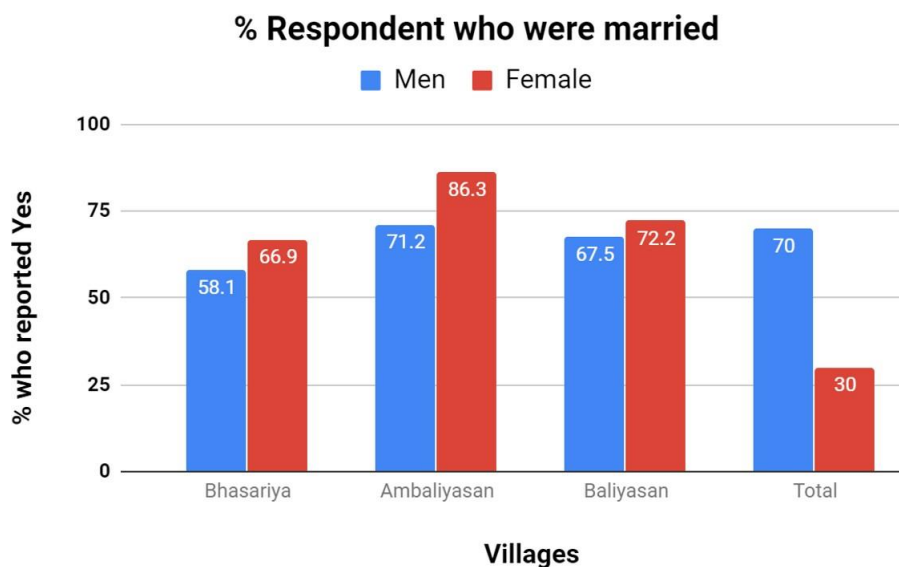


Figure 5 %Respondents who were married

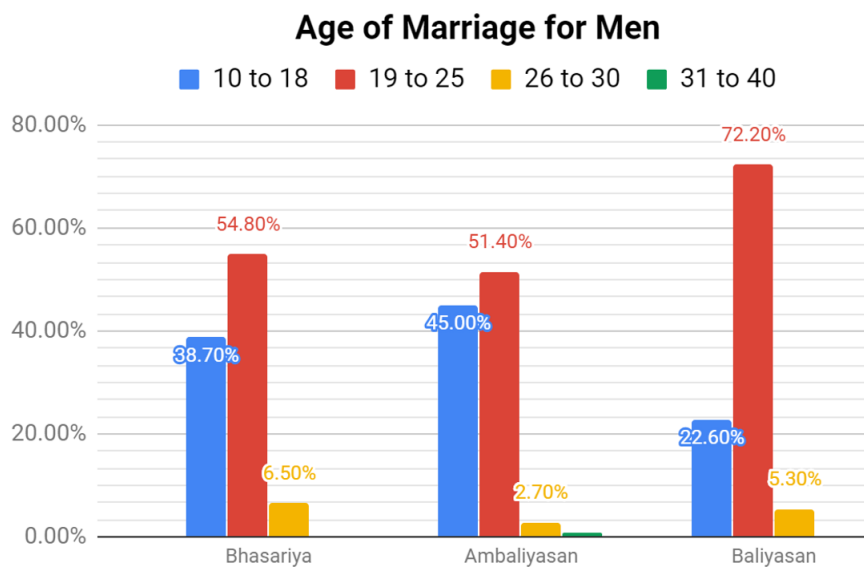


Figure 4 Age of Marriage for Men

Type of House (Source: Baseline Survey)

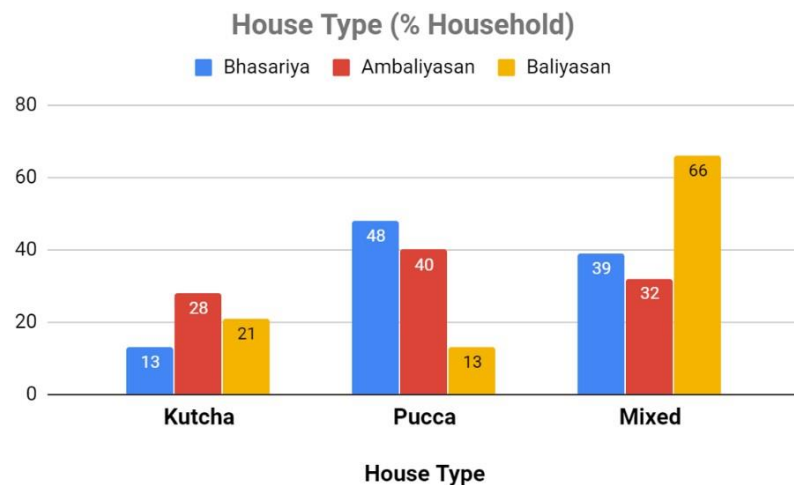


Figure 6 Type of house

Source of Lighting (Source: Baseline Survey)

Electricity is the main source of lighting to about 99% of the household in all the three villages. However, 1% of the household reported the use of kerosene for the lighting requirements.

Source of fuel for cooking: (Source: Baseline Survey)

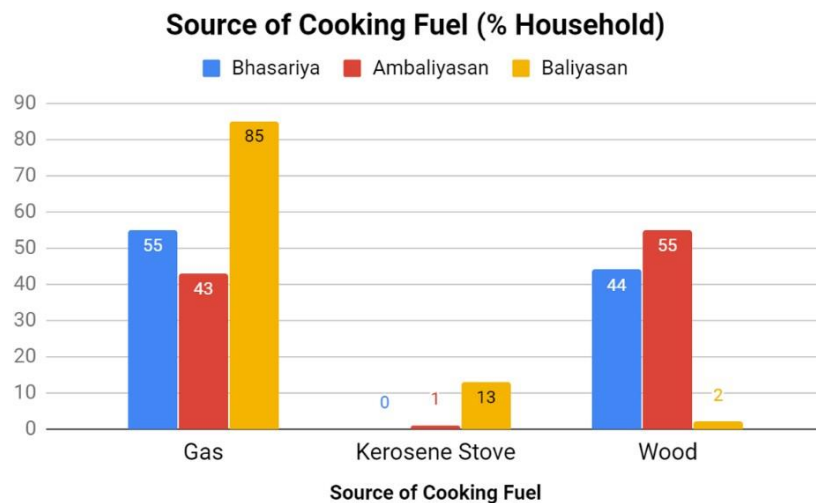


Figure 7 Source of Cooking Fuel

Results of the Impact Assessment Survey are presented in the following section:

3.2 Gender Role Perspective

Women have been doing the same jobs for ages and it is assumed the work done will be paid less or not paid at all. At the same time work done by women at home is not considered as work at all. This ancestral thinking has influenced perceptions of males and even of females towards gender equality. Many women accepted their fate, especially in our project area. In 2016 when Project Shakti was initiated women reported of domestic violence in Focus Group Discussions but refused to answer about the same in one to one interview. To capture data on violence an indirect method was applied, where both men and women were asked about the changes, they wished to see in the lives of women which subsequently led to disclosures on mobility restrictions, safety in the village and violence. In this impact assessment study, the qualitative in-depth interviews try to capture the perception of both men and women towards existing gender roles where men are breadwinners and women are unpaid labor for agriculture, animal husbandry, and housework and nurturers as well. These are presented in a separate report. The current report is based on quantitative data.

It was enquired whether there was a need for change in the lives of women. The following figure illustrates the findings:

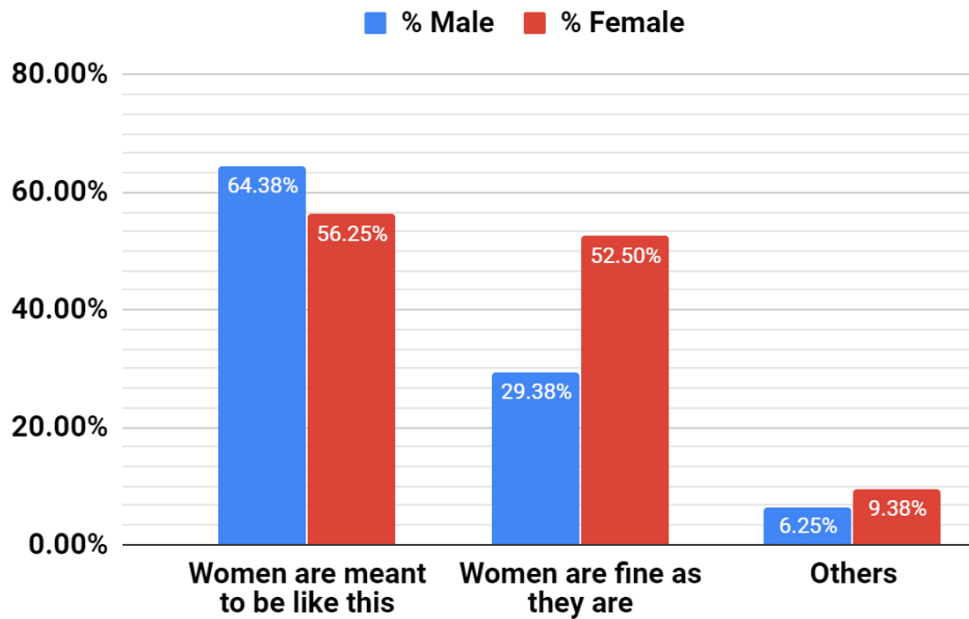


Figure 8 Attitude towards women

Figure 8 (Source: Impact Assessment Survey) shows more than 60% male and 50% women felt “Women are meant to be where they are”. In the baseline the proportion of males and females reporting that women need change in their lives was higher (males- 93.3% and females-95.5%). With the changes in the lives of women, especially the income generating activities through SHGs and gender sensitization of both men and boys the proportion of men and women reporting that women and girls need change in their lives has come down significantly. However, a greater number of women as compared to men have reported in the impact assessment survey that “Women are fine as they are”. These respondents are mostly women who are not part of Project Shakti. This also indicates the scope within the actual sample which needs to be reached out for attitude change through Project Shakti.

It may be noted that no significant activities or interventions have been carried out with men except for a few gender sensitization training sessions and that too not with the entire sample. Also, it has been 11 months since the project was introduced in Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan which is too early to show significant changes.

72% and 76%, men and women respectively said that women in their community need change. Interestingly, when women and men were asked about what kind of change was required in the lives of women, it projected a paradoxical situation. People, on one

hand have reported their village safe for women and on the other hand request for change in attitude and safer environment for women. It can be inferred that people do not want to label their village as unsafe for women, however they know changes are required to make it safe in reality.

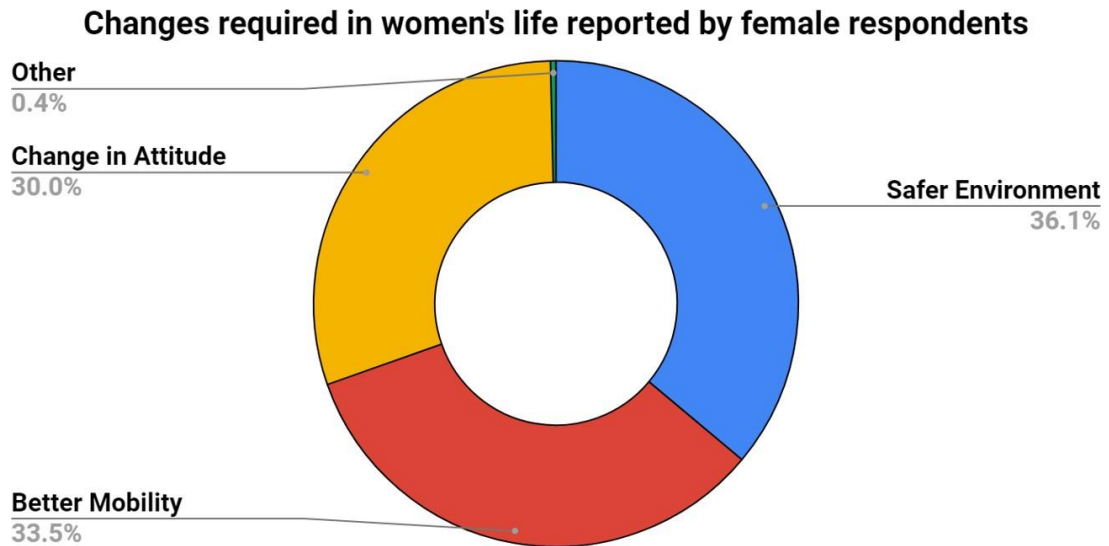


Figure 9 Changes required in Women's life reported by female respondents

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

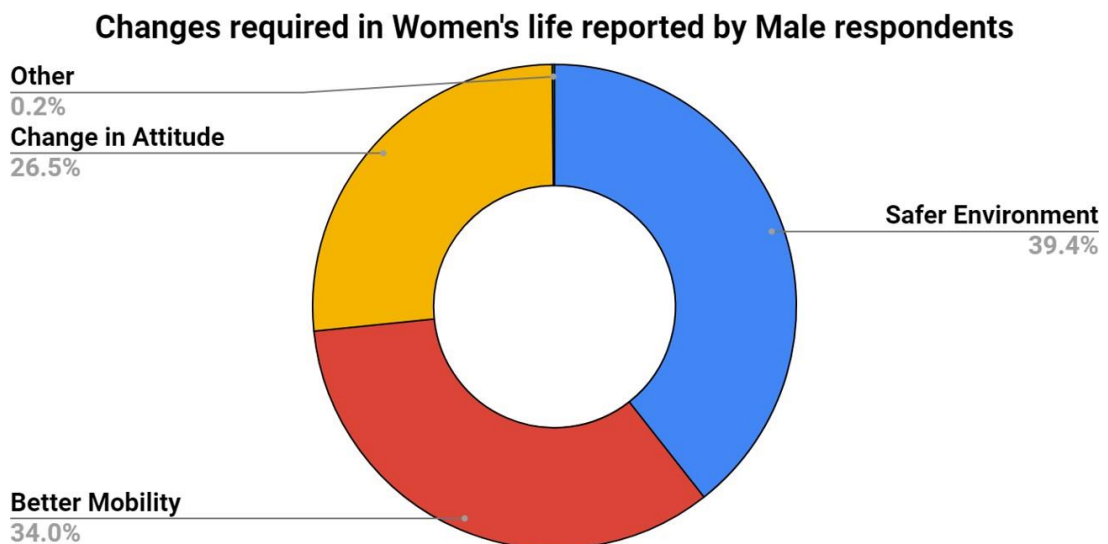


Figure 10 Changes required in Women's life reported by male respondents

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

Attitude towards gender roles influence the extent of gender inequality. A question asking the safety of women and girls in their villages was asked to all respondents. Around 20% of male respondents feel that girls are not safe in their villages and 15% of women feel the same. Those all who feel girls are not safe in their villages were further asked what changes they would want to see within their villages to make the women feel safe. Figure 11 shows women feel that sensitizing men on gender equality and domestic violence is important to make girls and women feel safe in the village. Also, the majority of men reported alcoholism should be stopped to create a safe environment for women.

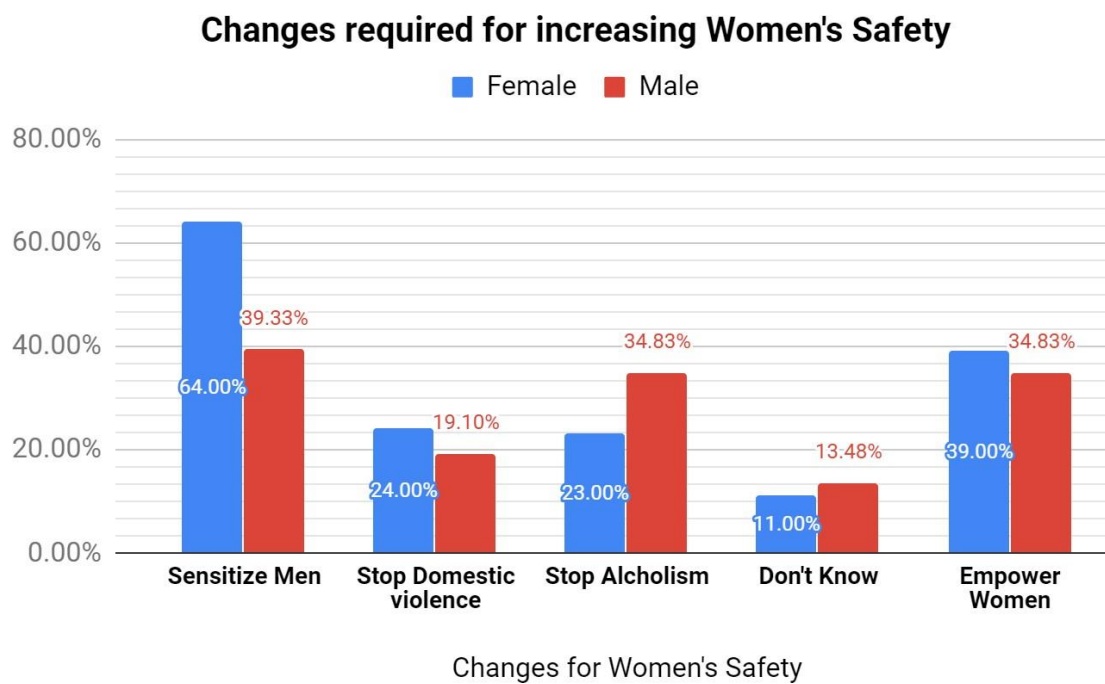


Figure 11 Changes required for increasing women's safety

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

A set of questions on domestic violence were asked to the respondents, however they were not part of the baseline survey. Majority of the respondent, both male and female reported spousal beating is not acceptable. Similarly, almost no one thought that women should eat last in the household and the use of sonography for sex detection is a good practice. Also, almost all respondents reported a decrease in child marriages in their villages. Such change should be attributed to the efforts put by Project Shakti in creating awareness about such sensitive topics within the villages. However,

surprisingly 21% of women respondent feel that forced sexual relationship within the household is acceptable. Similarly, the question on the use of derogatory language by husbands received 54 “Yes” from the women respondents. Round 50 women also believed that housework is the responsibility of the women.

As mentioned earlier, one of the objectives of Project Shakti has been to bring social empowerment by ending the cruel practice of female feticide and to increase the child sex ratio through gender awareness activities. Currently, at the end of phase 3, 99%, almost all of the respondents were against using sonography for sex detection. Figure 12 shows the reasons they think behind this change. More than 50% of people have reported the impact of Project Shakti behind the decrease in female feticide. This perspective was built through the multiple pieces of training, community dialogues, counseling and focus group discussions conducted through Project Shakti with both men and women from all three villages. The training was directed towards many issues related to gender equality, few among them were awareness on gender violence, sensitization of both men and women, prevention of female feticide.

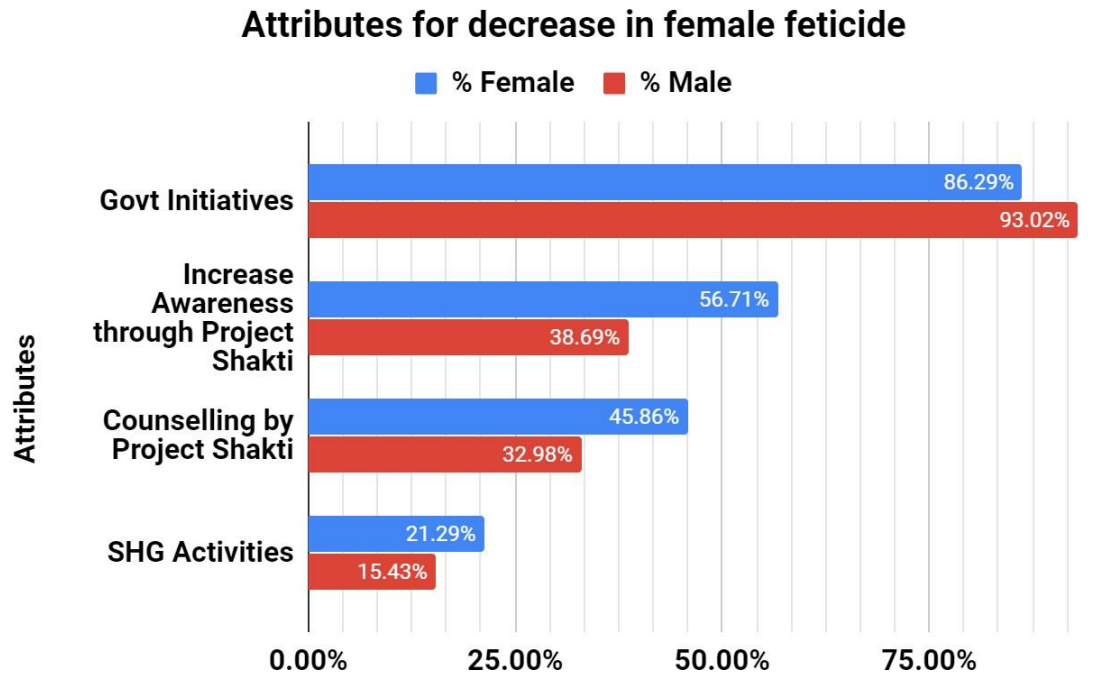


Figure 12 Attributes for a decrease in female feticide within the villages

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

In Project Shakti, three key methods were used for bringing social change: increase in awareness, counselling and activities through SHGs. An attempt was made to identify which key activity of Project Shakti has been most successful. It was found that increased awareness through training sessions was most successful, followed by counselling. The SHGs have not yet been trained with regard to how they can be catalysts in bringing social change using all the knowledge they have imbibed from the training programmes at the village level and through community-based institutions- the SHG itself as well as other Government supported institutions. This will be one of the targets during the 4th phase of Project Shakti.

3.3 Child Marriage Status

Census 2011 of India, reports that one in three married women having being wed before she was 18 years old. This number turns out to be 100 million women married before the age of 18 years. This is the situation when there is a law in place which criminalizes marrying a girl before she is 18 years. Project Shakti has been emphasizing on the prevention of child marriages through different methods including

Focus Group Discussions, Community Dialogues, Training Programmes, and Counseling.

It is worth noting that child marriages were common in Baliyasan (pilot village) (Source: Primary Research done under Project Shakti) before Project Shakti started operations there. Now, around 99% of respondent are against a girl getting married before she turns 18 years old. In the past three years, zero child marriages have been reported in Baliyasan.

It was enquired as to what factors contributed to the decrease in child marriages. Respondents informed that the change is attributed to Government Initiatives and Project Shakti. Some have clearly mentioned about increased awareness due to training programmes and community dialogues and some have mentioned counseling as the key factor for change. This question was asked to evaluate the impact for multiple activities undertaken Project Shakti.

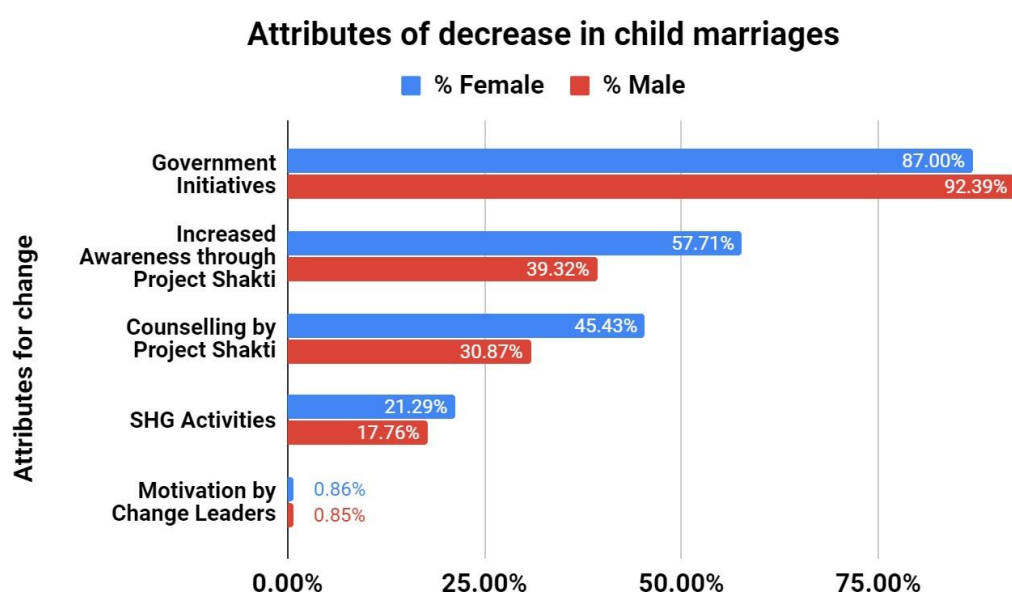


Figure 14 Attributes for the decrease in child marriages within the villages

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

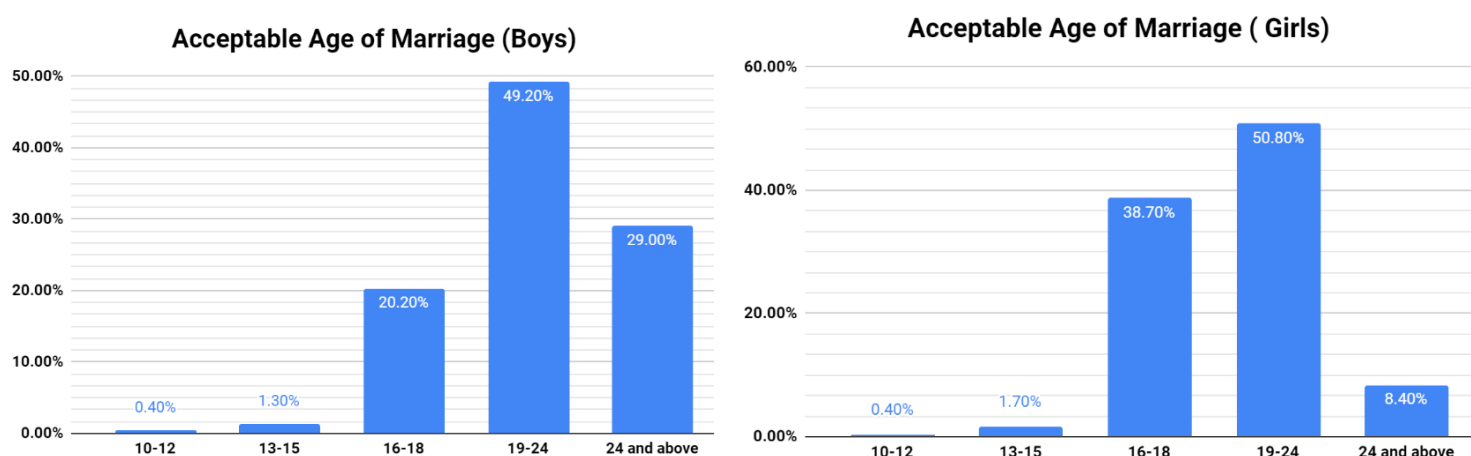


Figure 15 Acceptable age for marriage (Boys and Girls)

Respondents were asked about the appropriate age of marriage for both girls and boys. Figure 15 shows still 39 % of respondents feel that the acceptable age of marriage for girls is between 16-18 years.

3.4 Mobility

During the pilot phase of the project, women from Baliyasan reported (through FGDs) was limited to their respective hamlets, Milk Cooperative and agricultural fields. Frequency of travel outside the village was limited to occasional events such as marriages, deaths, and shopping before Navaratri or for special occasions. During multiple FGD's women were of the opinion that nearby industrialization was the reason for increase in alcoholism, making the villages unsafe for women and girls. On the other hand, women from one hamlet would not interact with women from another caste/ hamlet because caste feelings were strong.

In connection with work, the baseline indicated that the maximum number of people moved up to 10 Kms for work. From the baseline sample, 138 women from across the 3 villages reported about their mobility

in connection with work (economic). Out of the 138, approximately 80.6% reported traveling within 10 km, 16.36% reported traveling within 11 to 25 km and a negligible number of women traveled beyond that(3%).

With Project Shakti happening, women and adolescent girls were engaged in various activities relating to income generation, social change, and health. Given this change in their lives, there was an improvement in their mobility.

Key findings from in depth interviews with 18 Project Shakti Individuals:

- Mobility outside the boundary of the home and interaction with outside people improves self-confidence among women.
- Socio-economic situation of women in the case study area is constrained by the division of labor between men and women.
- Women are mostly confined to home-based work. So, the economic development programs of the Project Shakti have had an impact on their mobility outside the home.

Forty-Five women began going to the Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) which is 35 km away, they began visiting the Krishi Mela which is 30 Kms from these villages, the District auditorium on Women's Day which is 18 km from the villages and local markets to purchase raw material for Gruha Udyog and tailoring in a radius of 30 km.

Out of a sample of 247 females in the impact assessment survey, 48% of females were aware about other women attending Krishi Mela (in terms of mobility 30 Kms) and 42% were aware about women attending Women's Day Celebrations (in terms of mobility 18 km).

The Village Knowledge Center provides women and girls a window of opportunity to gain knowledge and information, a safe place in the village to visit from different hamlets from within the village as well as from different villages and space that they can claim as their own.

3.5 Change leaders to accelerate change in the lives of women and girls

There was an identified need for leaders from among the women and adolescent girls who would accelerate change. There were no such leaders in the Panchayats/Villages of our project area earlier. Since 2016 we have 10 active change leaders in Baliyasan village and 1 in Ambaliyasan since 2019 first quarter. The change leaders actively participate in all Project Shakti programmes. They have selected subjects of their interest from the Project Shakti training modules and some of them (5) have turned into resource persons. They visit other villages to teach soft skills including talk on the prevention of child marriage and female feticide. In this impact assessment, 3 change leaders were involved in the collection of data which they were trained to do by the Impact Assessment team. Some of them are keen to take up key positions in Project Shakti and drive it forward.

3.6 Time Spent on Traditional Economic Activities

The impact assessment and baseline both indicate that Agriculture is the main occupation of the three villages, with Ambaliyasan being the least engaged in

agriculture because a part of Ambaliyasan has been declared as urban area giving more scope for engaging in activities other than agriculture. It must be noted that both male and female respondents though small in numbers are contributing almost equal time to agricultural work in all the three villages. Along with Agricultural work, women are also engaged in doing household work. Same is the story of Bhasariya and Baliyasan as seen in the following figures. The number of hours of work by women at home is up to 8 hours in most households in addition to the work that they do in connection with agriculture which varies between 4-8 hours. On an average woman would be working for 12-16 hours in a day. In spite of such contribution in terms of labor, their decision-making powers were limited and access to credit and financial support was also limited. Further, the four months in a year which is a lean period in agriculture in the project area (monsoon months), family income would reduce and women suffer the most as they start taking 2 meals in a day instead of 3. (Primary Research done under Project Shakti)

Project Shakti aimed at empowering women economically/ financially so that women could access financial institutions as and when required, gain respect, through alternate livelihoods have access to money and through SHGs have savings, access to banks, credit availability and solidarity and collective voice and confidence. These have been discussed in the following sections.

3.7 Financial Empowerment

Financial inclusion is the key factor in the process of women empowerment. Financial literacy is the first step towards developing a financial identity for a woman through her savings. Actions, like opening a bank account and gaining the knowledge of operating a bank account, open the doors for formal credit access. Access to credit can help empower women economically.

Results from the individual questionnaire showed that on average 88% of the women who are part of the SHG have opened a bank account. However, just opening a bank account does not create an impact. The ability of the woman to operate that bank account by adding her saving every month is equally important. The habit of saving improves the creditworthiness of women. One can see in the figure below that, on an

average 65% of women participating in the SHG know how to operate a bank account and most of them have savings in those bank accounts. Improved access to the financial institutions and financial practices depicts the growing impact of Project Shakti.

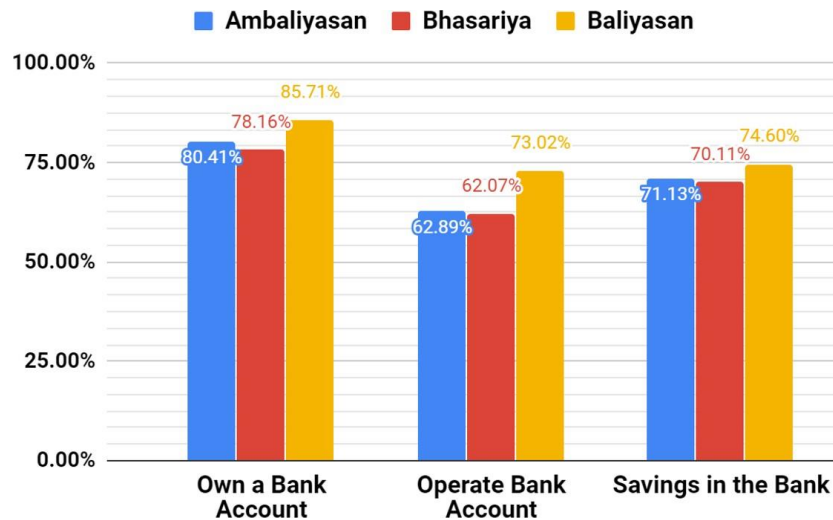


Figure 16 Status of access to bank accounts and its operation

Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

According to government of India's recent policies, having an Aadhar card and Pan Card have become important. To get involved into an economic activity, having an Aadhar card and Pan Card helps in making the process smooth. As seen in the figure below, we found that Project Shakti has been impactful to help people get their pan cards. We can see significant rise in the population owning a Pan card as compared to the population during the baseline. For instance, no one from the sampled population during the baseline had a pan card. However, now 22% female and 45% have their pan card made. This was possible because of the services provided through the Village Knowledge Center. Similar was the case with Aadhar card. Almost 99% population now has access to Aadhar card.

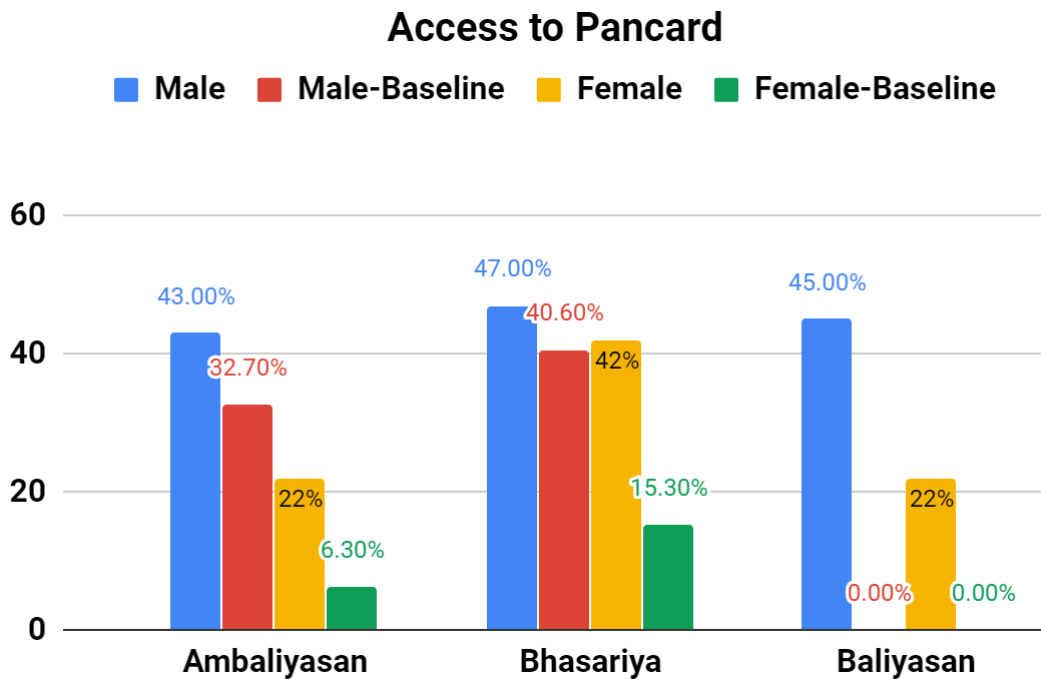


Figure 17 Access to Pan card

Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

3.7.1 Training and Capacity building

The main pathway adopted by Project Shakti to empower the women is through capacity and skills development of all the women. The main objective of Project Shakti is to make all women independent and give them confidence by building some specific skills. Thus, women can successfully participate in some economic activity and opinionate her voice without any or little support from Project Shakti in the future. To fulfill this objective, training on multiple aspects of SHG and its operations was imparted. During Phase 3, 71 sessions were conducted to impart knowledge on the factors involved in social, financial empowerment and good governance practices. Training specific to gender sensitization were also conducted and men were involved in these training. “How to make a Business Plan”, “Financial Literacy”, “Gender Sensitization” were some of the topics covered in the training. Training sessions on “Gender Sensitive & Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plan” for the Gram Panchayat members were successfully carried out. Members from five GP’s attended the training sessions. In Phase 3 of Project Shakti, training of more than 145 hours has been successfully completed. Up till now more than 100 training and 600 hours

of knowledge have been delivered to both men and women. On an average, 60 people attended each session during phase 3 of Project Shakti.

3.7.2 Awareness about Various Schemes:

Awareness about various schemes of the State and Central Government is critical for people to know so that they can access benefits. During the baseline, awareness about 23 schemes were covered and during the present study, 14 more schemes were added to the questionnaire. On average, it is seen that people are now more aware of schemes than before. Presently, women and adolescent girls are now more aware of government scholarships than they were during the baseline study. Awareness among people about the majority of the schemes has increased. Respondents were unaware about the National Livelihood Mission (during the baseline study). Now, although low, 4-5% of respondents have become aware about the programme. Very few females are aware about Matru Vandana Yojana, which provides conditional cash transfer to pregnant mothers. Activities creating awareness about such programmes need to be further organized. Still, there are multiple schemes people being not aware about. Project Shakti needs to organize awareness programmes for these specific schemes so that people can benefit from them. Detailed tables about awareness of various

schemes among the people during baseline and impact assessment survey can be found in Appendix 4.

3.8 Self Help Group and Livelihood Generation

In 2016 when Project Shakti was initiated there were no SHGs functioning in the Project Area. SHGs are a powerful medium for financial empowerment of women engaged in the activities of the group. Participation in the SHG has shown improved mobility of the women within and outside the village. It also provides an opportunity to build the habit of saving and provides access to low-interest credit for the women themselves.

In total, 18 SHG's have been created under the activities of Project Shakti. Women from 239 households are involved in SHG activities. All women have been trained in multiple aspects of SHG and its operations. Some groups do tailoring activities, some do Gruha Udyog and some only save. At present, SHG members have saved more than Rs Two lakhs. All members of the SHG were part of the impact assessment and the following results depict the impact involvement in SHG has had on all of them. Following chart shows the number of men and women who are part of any group engaged in either saving or any entrepreneurial activity. There are 6 SHG's in each of the three villages; Ambaliyasan, Bhasariya, and Baliyasan. Men from Ambaliyasan have also formed a group.

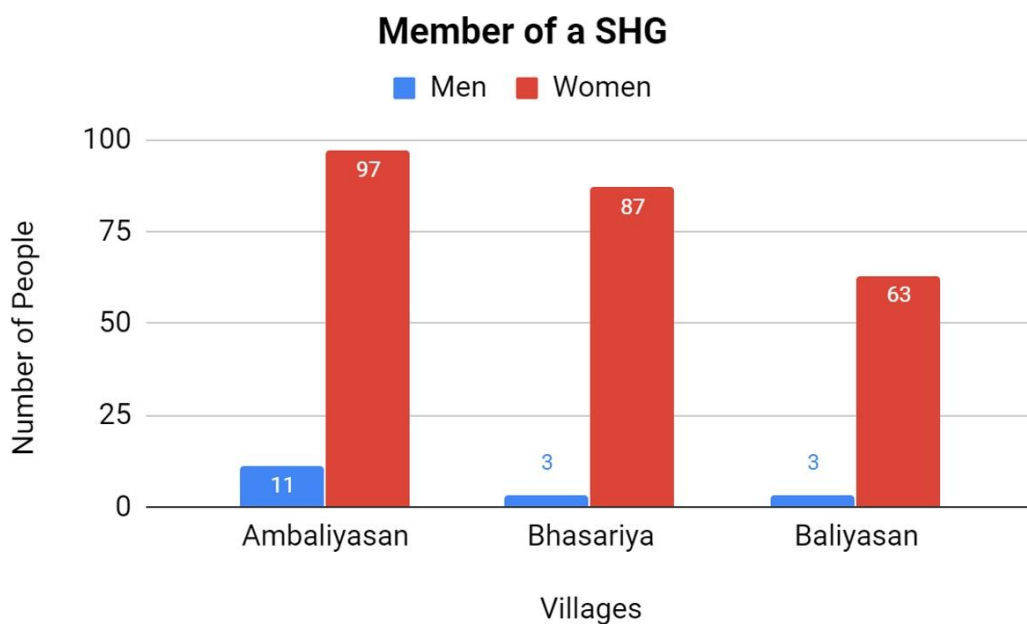


Figure 18 Distribution of SHG members across the three villages

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

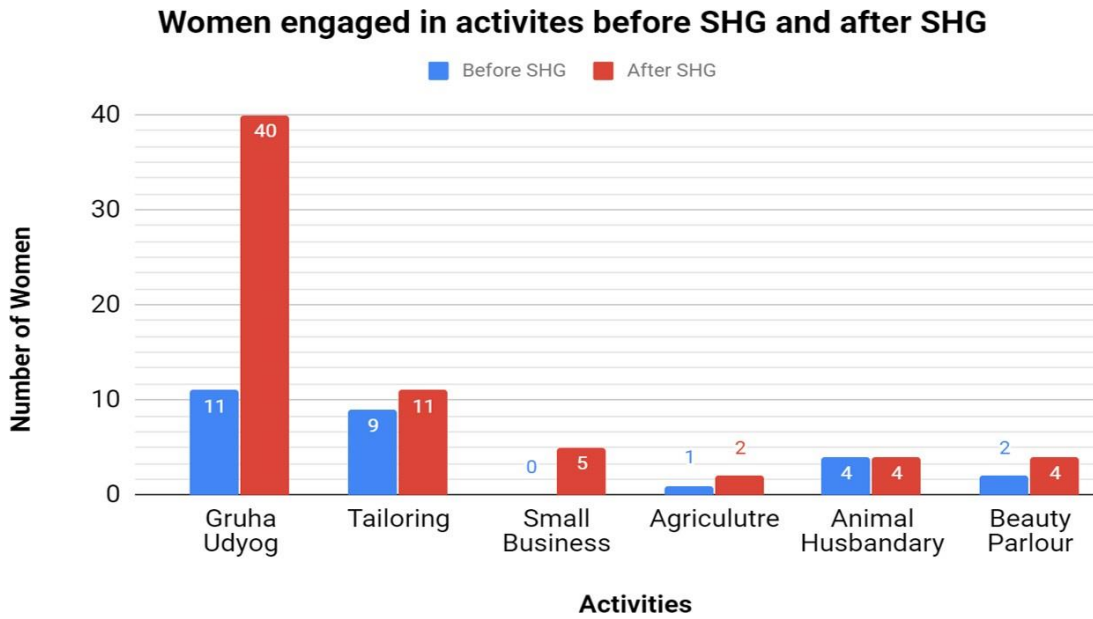


Figure 19 Women engaged in activities before SHG and after SHG

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

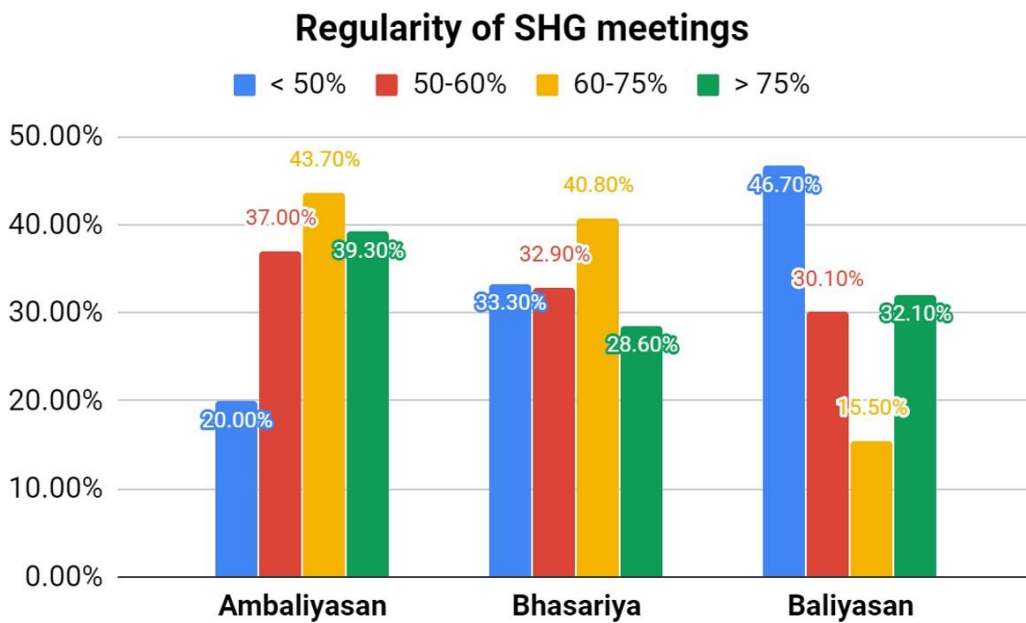


Figure 20 Regularity of the SHG meetings reported by the members

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

As seen above in Figure 20, members from Ambaliyasan and Bhasariya reported attendance of 60-75% while the majority member reported less than 50% regularity in the SHG meetings. The next phase of Project Shakti should have a mechanism to ensure regular meetings of the SHG members.

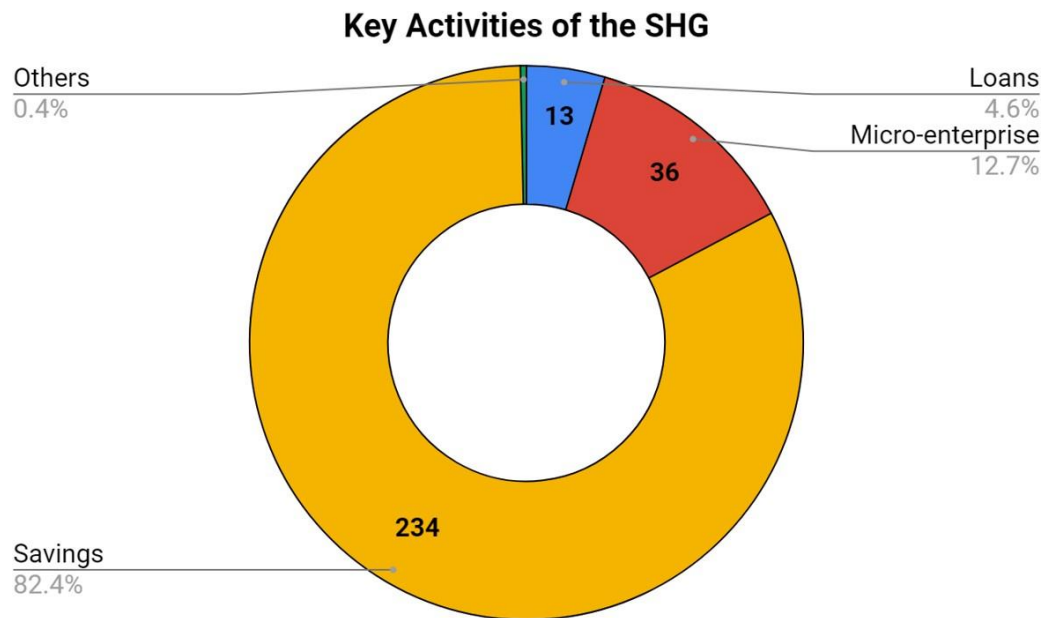


Figure 21 Key Activities undertaken by the SHG members

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

Figure 21 shows the majority of the SHG members are engaged in savings as a part of the SHG. 12.6% members reported working on a micro-enterprise.

Figure 22 helps us to understand the motivation of the members joining the group. As seen below "Improving Social Status" was the highest reported reason by the SHG members followed by "Improving Economic Status". 14.9% of the members reported "Financial Support" as their reason for joining the group.

Reasons for joining the SHG

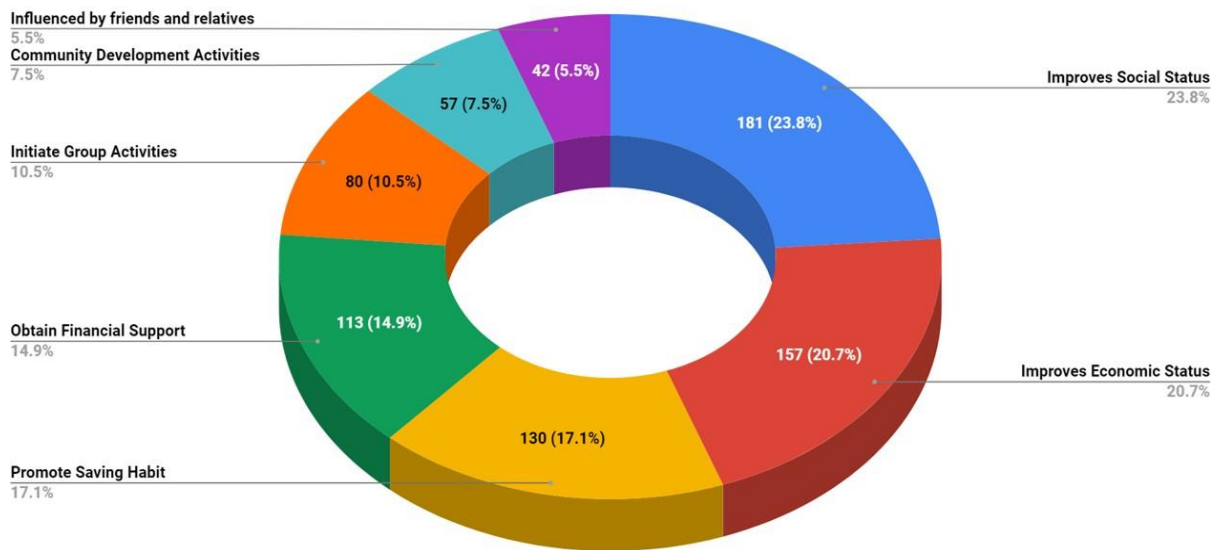


Figure 22 Reasons for joining the SHG reported by the members

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

Figure 23 shows that members belonging from the age groups 19-30 years are saving the most. Members of the age group 31-40 years and 40-50 years from Baliyasan village save the most compared to the other two villages. Though not much, Figure 23 also shows the involvement of adolescent's girls. More than 50% of the members save Rs 50, with members also saving Rs 200 though small in numbers.

Table 6 indicated the summary of savings by the SHGs over the three years of Project Shakti. It can be clearly seen that women have started saving more over the years. Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan, where SHGs were started in 2018/2019 are catching up the SHGs from Baliyasan. Details of the savings of each SHG member can be found in Appendix 2. Along with savings, women are also involved in some kind of commercial activities. Table 7 shows the summary of earnings done by each SHG from all the three villages. It can be seen that more than half of the SHGs are involved in some kind of activities and are earning some income. Women are involved in Gruha Udyog, Tailoring activities. However, many SHGs from Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan need to open their group bank account. Efforts to open bank accounts should be accelerated through Project Shakti.

Members saving pattern across different age groups

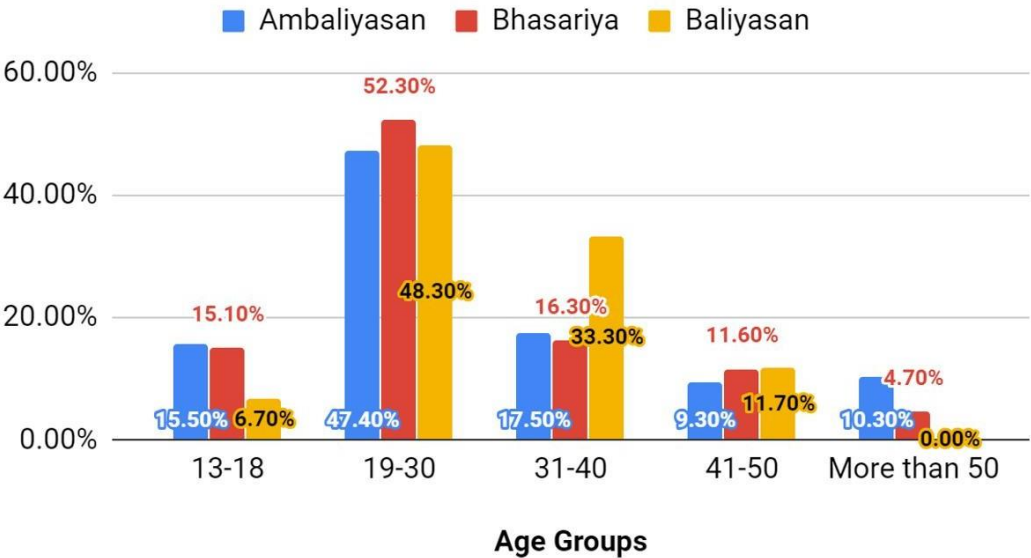


Figure 23 Saving pattern across members of different age groups

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

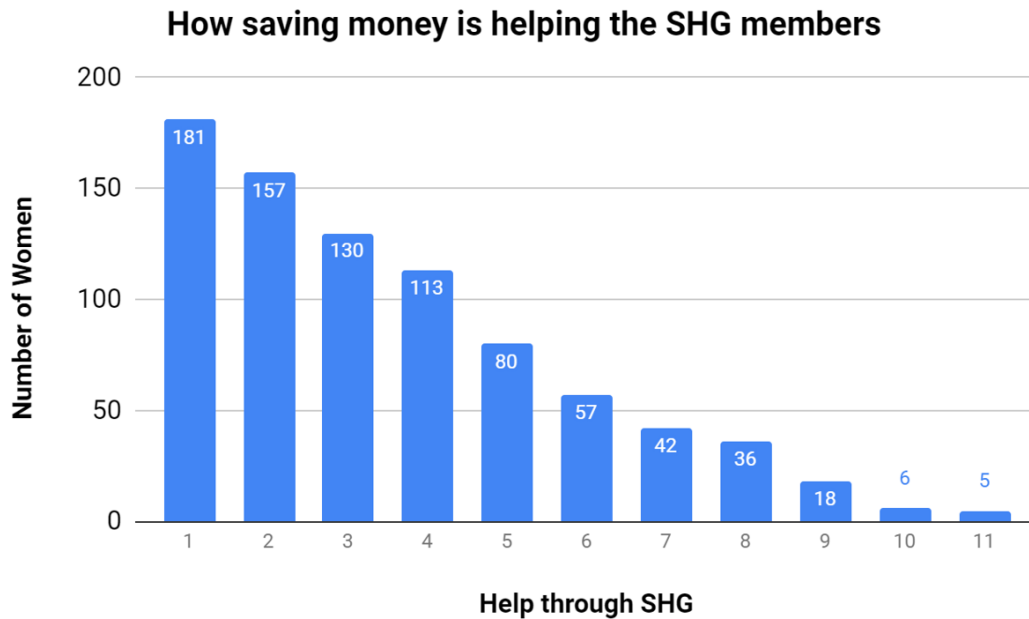


Figure 24 Factors in which savings are helping SHG members

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

The label used for the above chart

1. It helps in lending within the group
2. It helps in meeting personal requirements
3. It helps at the time of emergency
4. It makes me secure that I have some money that I can easily access for myself
5. It helps me meet the requirements of social events
6. It helps me meet the educational requirements of my children
7. It helps me with money for my business
8. It makes me economically independent
9. It helps me gain respect in my family
10. It helps me gain respect in my community
11. Others

As seen in Figure 24 majority of the women reported the availability of funds within the group as a major help through savings done as SHG members.

Effect of Joining a SHG

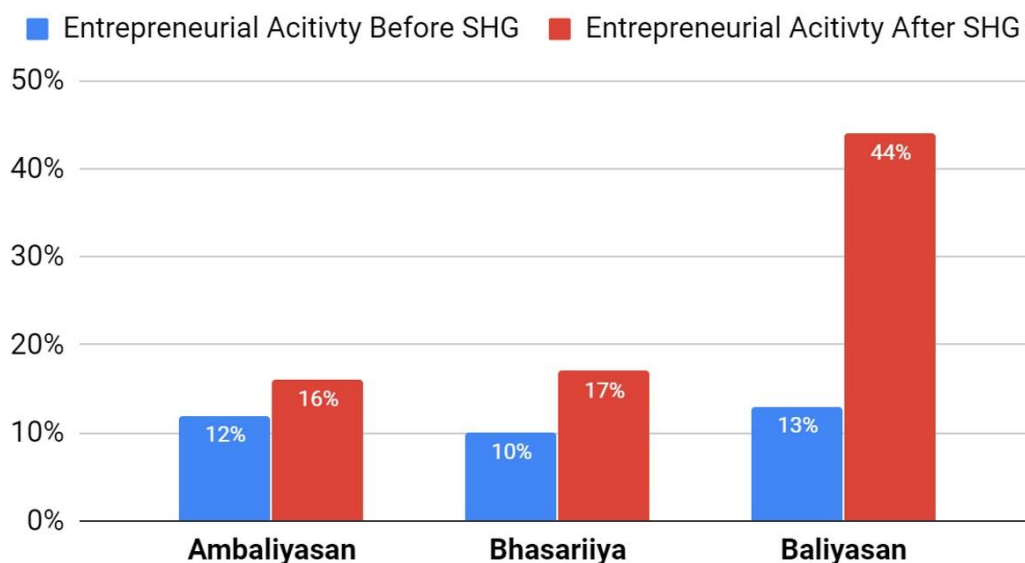


Figure 25 Entrepreneurial activities before and after SHG

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

It can be seen from the above Figure 25 that there was an increase in women taking up entrepreneurial activities after joining the SHG. Project Shakti has been recently initiated in Ambaliyasan and Bhasariya, hence the marginal increase. Baliyasan has shown significant increase given Project Shakti has been active there for more than 2 years. Out of the 247 members of the SHG, 34 women reported a positive change in their income. The average increase seen in their income was of Rs 700/month (Impact Assessment Survey)

Attitude of Family member before joining the SHG

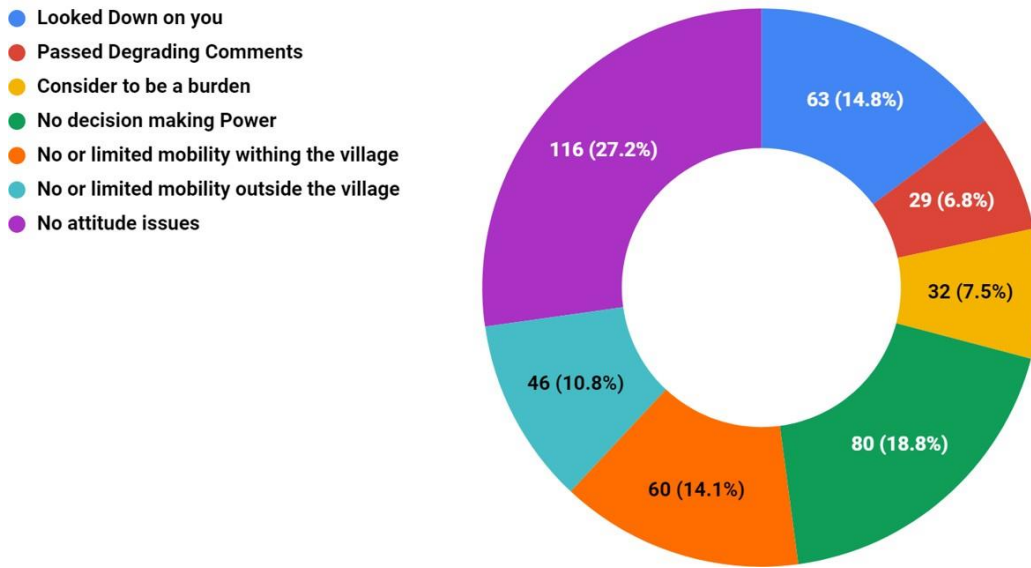


Figure 26 Attitude of family members before joining the SHG

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

The majority of women who have joined SHG reported their family members didn't have attitude issues towards them. Among those who have reported some issues, "No power in decision making" constituted the biggest share of around 20%, followed by 15% has limited mobility outside the village.

Attitude of the family member after joining the SHG

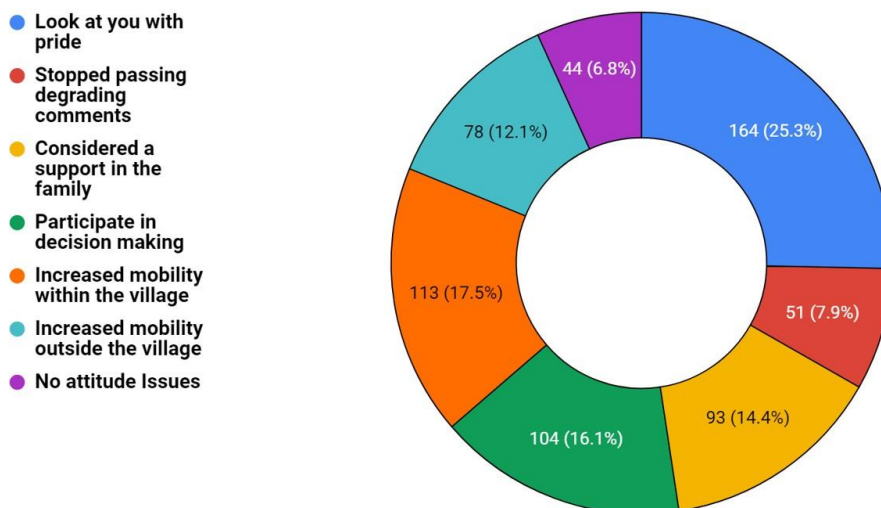


Figure 27 Attitude of the family members after joining the SHG

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

Figure 27 shows family members attitude has improved after the women joined the SHG and started earning some income. Women have reported increased mobility within and outside the village.

3.9 Decision Making

Woman's autonomy is the necessary condition of her to feel empowered. The ability to take a decision for herself for her family and self is the step towards empowerment. It can be found in the literature on women empowerment (*Bold et al, Women Empowerment and Nutrition, 2013, Akter et al, Women Empowerment and gender equity in agriculture: A different perspective from Southeast Asia Acharya et al, Women's Autonomy in household decision making: A demographic survey in Nepal, 2010*), improving the decision-making ability of the women benefits the women as well as the household itself. When given an opportunity to spend money, women are more likely to spend on the wellbeing of the family than men who are likely to spend the money on their personal requirement. Following graph captures the decision makers within the households of all three villagers as reported by the female respondents. It can be seen, parents are the major decision makers within the household, which resonates with the Indian culture and patriarchal practices that are followed. Very few women have reported their independence to take a decision within the households. Project Shakti needs to work with these groups of women. Organize activities and training

which can help them voice their opinions within the households. A similar pattern can be seen when controls over spending in a household are analyzed.

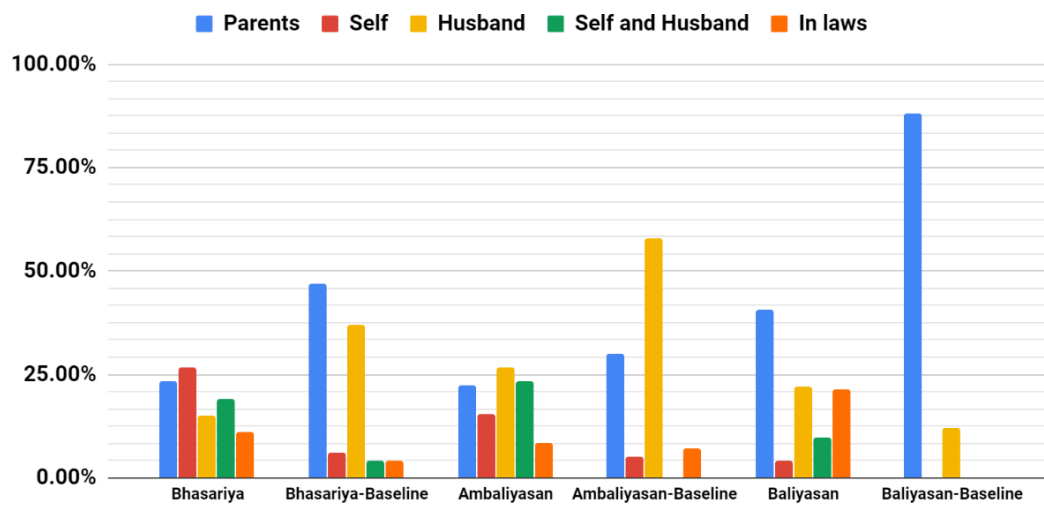


Figure 28 Major Decision Makers in a household

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

The figure above indicates that major decisions in a household are still taken predominantly by Parents and Husband. If we compare Bhasariya Village at the time of baseline with the current time of impact assessment, it may be noted that decision making by self has considerably improved from 6 % to 27 % so also major decision making jointly by husband and wife (from 4 % to 19 %). In Ambaliyasan interestingly major decision making by women has improved from 5 % to 15%. In Ambaliyasan during the baseline, it was found that major decision making was with either parent or with the husband. During the impact assessment, we find a distribution where decision making is now made by women as well as jointly by husband and wife and to some extent by in-laws. The progress in Baliyasan is that instead of parents and husbands alone taking major decisions there is a reporting of 10 % taking joint decisions and a minimal 4% decisions being taken by the wife. There still is a lot of scope of improvement in women’s control over major decision making. Project Shakti will need to work towardsthis.

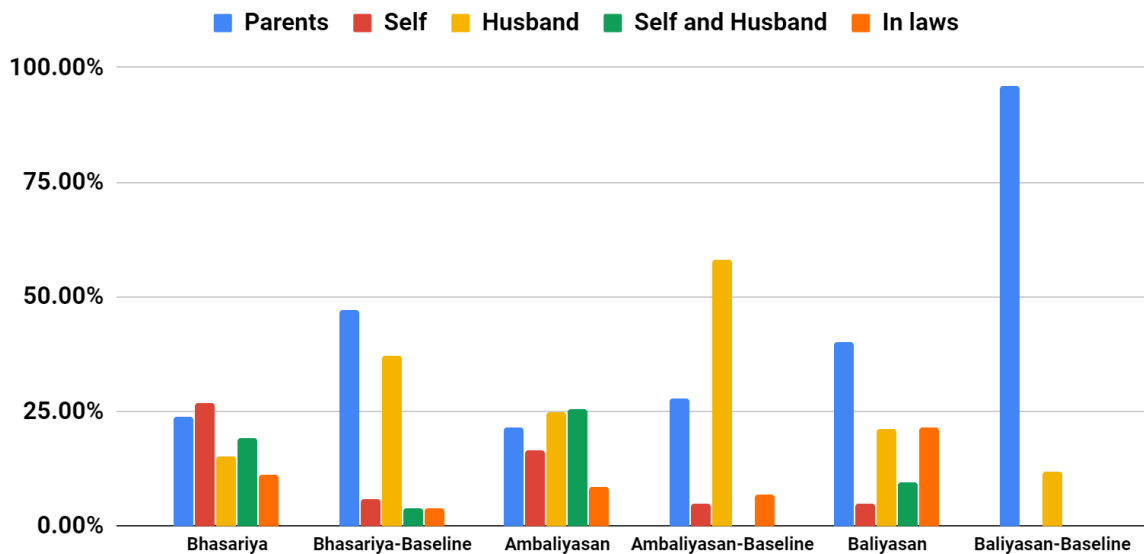


Figure 29 Decision on Spending on basic requirements for self

(Source: Impact Assessment Survey)

The above figure indicates the power of decision making with regard to spending on the basic requirements of the woman by herself. The data indicates a similar pattern where although the change has been small it is not insignificant because there is a small change in the proportion of women who take decisions for purchasing basic things for themselves. There still is a lot of scope of improvement in women’s control over making decisions to spend money on her own basic requirements. Project Shakti will need to work towards this.

3.10 Good Governance Practices

3.10.1 Absence of Gender Sensitive and Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Plans

In 2016, when Project Shakti was introduced in the project area in Baliyasan Panchayat/ Village, Focus Group Discussions with the PRI members indicated that the Gram Panchayat Development Plan for both Baliyasan and Bhasariya (they had a common PRI Secretary) were not gender sensitive nor were they gender inclusive. Further FGDs with women indicated that women feared to visit the Panchayat because they did not have the courage to interact with PRI members, were not aware of their rights and how to approach them, caste issues. In 2016 a training programme of 5

hours duration was introduced for the PRI members. During this time the soft skill training of women and adolescent girls had just ended and they had selected change leaders from among themselves. Further, the ASHA and Anganwadi workers were also participants of the soft skill training. Having been trained on understanding gender issues, social and economic empowerment and soft skills, the change leaders and the health and nutrition functionaries joined the training session on Gender Sensitive and Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Planning. The sessions were conducted by trainers from NIRD and SIRD-Gujarat.

Subsequently, in 2017 Baliyasan Panchayat produced a Gram Panchayat Development Plan and consulted few women while developing it. It was found that the plan was not truly gender sensitive and inclusive therefore another training session of 5 hours along with PRA activities was introduced to 11 Gram Panchayats. The training was done in the Village Knowledge Center. Project Shakti objectives, goals and methodology was also introduced to them. The members of the 11 Gram Panchayats of Mehsana block went across Baliyasan Panchayat and visited all the locations where Project Shakti was visible in terms of active women and activities. Out of these 11, Arupa Mission Research Foundation was invited to implement Project Shakti in 5 Gram Panchayats. Based on available funding and proximity to the McCain Plant, in addition to Baliyasan Panchayat, Ambaliyasan and Bhasariya Panchayat were selected for scaling up Project Shakti.

In 2018-19 which is the 3rd phase training on Gender-Inclusive Gram Panchayat Development Planning has been done in Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan however participation of women was poor in these training.

3.10.2 Participation of women in Gram Panchayat Activities and Gram Sabha

As of now no activities relating to Gram Sabha have been introduced in the Project Shakti villages and so there is no knowledge of the role and function of a Gram Sabha and why everyone needs to participate. Currently, all discussions are done by a group of PRI members.

3.10.3 Absence of Village Health and Sanitation Committee

The Village Health and Sanitation Committee is critical for health and nutrition outcomes of the village. These were absent in all three villages. Project Shakti influenced the 3 Gram Panchayats to have in place the VHSC over multiple discussions. Currently, in phase III of the project Baliyasan and Bhasariya Gram Panchayat followed up on it and have formally institutionalized the VHSC, however, they are not yet aware of the function and role of the VHSC which needs to be taught to them.

3.10.4 Involvement of women in SHGs for development of villages

Involvement of women in Village Development/ good governance practices either from SHGs or as change leaders needs to be pursued.

Chapter 4 Key Insights

- In the past three years, the number of child marriages has diminished, and consciousness of people about it has also improved. Awareness activities about these sensitive issues have made the people at least state a discussion about these topics like child marriages and female feticide. This trend is an encouraging first step towards social change.
- There was a significant amount of improvement in the attitude of the family members of the women who joined SHG. The extra income generated by the women through participating in the entrepreneurial activities has increased their importance within the household. This importance has given them additional leverage to participate in the decision-making process within the family. However, Project Shakti should encourage more women to join in SHG activities and initiate procedures to institutionalize the SHG structure within the villages.
- Women, who are a member of the SHG, have access to bank accounts and most of them know how to operate the bank account. However, Project Shakti needs to initiate activities where women start using the saved amount for

credit-related activities and start entrepreneurial activities in Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan in a bigger way as well as get into value chain for entrepreneurs from Baliyasan and rural marketing.

- There has been a change in the power to make major decisions in all the three villages, with a greater number of women reporting that they either take decisions themselves or jointly with their husbands. The proportion of change in Baliyasan is noteworthy, where only parents and husbands took decisions earlier, now a small proportion of women have started taking decisions themselves or jointly with husbands. A little change is noticed in Bhasariya and Ambaliyasan too but much needs to be done to improve decision making powers of women.
- Confidence among women has increased. Women are now able to voice their opinions. Before Project Shakti women had accepted their position in the society, however after awareness and training through Project Shakti, women of Baliyasan have realized there is a whole new world beyond their regular life. Women also wish to work and be financially self-sustainable. Establishment of the Village Knowledge Centre has helped a lot in achieving these results. The place has given them a common platform to discuss their issues and channel to voice their opinion.
- Women, who are part of the SHG have an opportunity to come to the Village Knowledge Centre and move out of their homes. This has given the women confidence to mobilize within the village and to some extent outside the village. Yet, many feel that a lot of work needs to be done to empower all women. Not all women in the villages feel comfortable outside their homes. Project Shakti needs to engage every woman within the community which would mean further scale up within the villages and more investments.
- Women associated with Project Shakti shared their stages of improvement in life. All the women before the presence of Project Shakti in Baliyasan never thought beyond their family or household. With the presence of Project Shakti, their mobility has gone beyond household and community. Now women feel confident to come to village knowledge and share their stories. With facilitation from Project Shakti, they have also attended events outside the

village and attended training programmes at RSETI, Krishi Mela at Kherva and Women's Day celebrations conducted at the district level as well as participation in small exhibitions for selling their products. From the overall personal interview, it is also seen women have also started taking active participation in the financial decision of the household. Girls are reaching out to the village knowledge center asking for training and also refresher courses.

- Establishing marketing channels for the Gruha Udyog product was the major concern raised by the women from the SHGs which will be taken up in the next phase.

