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Maha Samruddhi Yojana (MSY)

Identification Phase 01

Observations &
Findings
May-July 2025



Prepared by
Center for Research in
Schemes & Policies (CRISP)

Maha Samruddhi Yojana (MSY) Identification Phase 1

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Executive Summary

The *Maha Samruddhi Yojana (MSY)*, also known as the *Maharashtra Inclusive Livelihoods Programme (MILP)*, adopts the globally recognised Graduation Approach to address multidimensional poverty and social exclusion. Implemented across four blocks in two districts—Peth and Trimbakeshwar in Nashik, and Akkalkuwa and Akrani in Nandurbar—the programme aims to improve the quality of life, economic empowerment, and social inclusion of 6,000 poor and vulnerable households, including tribal communities, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), and women.

MSY focuses on reaching extremely vulnerable households, particularly those excluded from mainstream government entitlements, through tailored interventions that promote sustainable livelihoods, income diversification, and resilience building. By leveraging community institutions and targeting geographies with significant forest cover and socio-economic disadvantage, MSY seeks to reduce poverty, bridge inequality gaps, and foster long-term prosperity for Maharashtra's most marginalised communities.

The *Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP)*, in partnership with *BRAC International*, conducted a concurrent evaluation of Phase I to assess system preparedness, planning, implementation, and management of the programme. The study also reviewed stakeholder participation in identifying programme participants, focusing on how effectively the *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)* processes were implemented, and how prepared systems and stakeholders were across state, district, block, cluster, and village levels to scale these activities in future phases.

Key Observations from the System Preparedness KIIs and FGDs:

Findings revealed that while UMED-MSRLM has made notable efforts through its SHG-VO-CLF network and community cadres, outreach remains uneven. Migration, remoteness, and limited facilitation capacity continue to restrict inclusion of the ultra-poor. Positive examples from *Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)* and *Integrated Farming Clusters (IFC)* demonstrate the effectiveness of hands-on, community-led training and value-chain linkages. However, convergence across departments remains mostly ad hoc and dependent on individual initiative rather than formal mechanisms.

Community-Based Organisations like VOs and CLFs continue to serve as crucial platforms for inclusion, but weak linkages with Gram Panchayats and irregular meetings reduce their effectiveness. Officials across levels emphasised the need for stronger documentation, structured coordination, and longer programme cycles.

Challenges at the SPMU include the absence of a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) resource at the State level. Field teams at both the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) and among the MSY cadres exhibited inconsistent understanding of the MSY objectives, highlighting a critical need for regular refresher training and improved conceptual clarity.

In addition to these, inconsistent capacity-building initiatives, and delayed cadre payments have collectively impacted staff motivation, the accuracy of record-keeping, and overall data quality.

Key Observations from PRA:

Field observations covered all stages of household identification, including VO meetings, transect walks, social mapping, household surveys, and endorsement meetings. While processes broadly followed MSY guidelines, their quality varied.

Many VO meetings recorded good participation but uneven understanding of the poor–Poorest of the Poor (PoP) distinction. Sakhis from outside villages sometimes struggled to build rapport, affecting open discussion. Transect walks and social mapping were well-conducted but often focused more on infrastructure than on poverty and livelihood issues. Participation from women, youth, from remote hamlets was limited. During household surveys, time constraints, travel distances, and lack of team support affected data accuracy, while duplication of entries and absence of consent-taking were also noted. VO endorsement meetings offered transparency but faced low attendance and weak documentation.

The *Inclusion–Exclusion surveys* confirmed similar patterns. Across seven villages, 187 rejected and 108 selected households were reviewed. Around 70% of rejected households were found to be eligible, indicating major exclusion errors. Inclusion errors, though fewer, involved duplication, automatic inclusion of PVTG families, and selection of households with productive assets. Exclusion errors stemmed mainly from migration, poor coverage of remote hamlets, and inconsistent application of eligibility criteria.

Areas for Strengthening:

a) Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

- Conduct regular refresher training and reflection workshops for *Samruddhi Sakhis* to reinforce programme concepts.
- Ensure timely communication with local stakeholders, including Gram Panchayat members, VO leadership and members, to improve participation.
- Establish clear exclusion criteria and strengthen household targeting through regular review with PMU.
- Conduct periodic reflection and refresher sessions for *Sakhis* and engage VOs and CLFs in timely discussions for resolution of issues.

b) PMU and Planning-Related Measures

- Institutionalise Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all stakeholders to ensure consistency.
- Appoint dedicated M&E personnel to strengthen process tracking and monitoring of outcomes.
- Enhance coordination with UMED and across departments through regular planning meetings and clear procedural guidelines.

- Adopt an *entitlement-first* approach by mapping available schemes, creating convergence plans, and supporting households in accessing entitlements.
- Establish regular monitoring and feedback loops to capture learnings and guide course corrections.

In summary, *Maha Samruddhi Yojana* has established a strong foundation for inclusive livelihoods in Maharashtra. To achieve lasting and meaningful impact, the programme must now focus on strengthening system preparedness, deepening capacity, formalising convergence, and extending support timelines so that the poorest households can move from vulnerability to resilience with dignity.

Study Team

The concurrent evaluation of the Maharashtra Inclusive Livelihood Program was conducted by CRISP in collaboration with BRAC International. The primary objective of this assessment was to evaluate system preparedness, stakeholder participation, and the inclusivity of the program participants identification process. The evaluation was led by Ms. Neha Dhingra, Program Lead, and supported by Ms. Anamika Nair, State Coordinator and Mr. Sanmesh Ranjanikar. The concurrent evaluation was also supported by Mr. Bhaskar Tiwary, Manager-Monitoring and Evaluation, CRISP.

The team expresses gratitude to CRISP mentors, Mr. S.M. Vijayanand (Retd. IAS), Mr. Sitaram Kunte (Retd. IAS) and Mr. K. Subrahmanyam (Retd. IAS) for their valuable inputs and guidance throughout the evaluation process.

We sincerely thank all UMED officials, PMU field staff, VO, CLF, Gram Panchayat members and Prabhag Samruddhi Sakhis and Samruddhi Sakhis for their time, commitment, and efforts toward the project, as well as for their valuable on-ground support to the CRISP team during this study.

Abbreviations

ASHA: Accredited Social Health Activist
CRISP: Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies
CE: Concurrent Evaluation
CRP: Community Resource Persons
CLF: Cluster Level Federations
CC: Cluster Coordinator
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility
DAY-NRLM: Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission
EC: Executive Committee
EVHH: Extremely Vulnerable Household
GP: Gram Panchayat
HH: Household
HHI: Household Identification
I-CRP: Internal – Community Resource Person
IFC: Integrated Farming Clusters
ILP: Inclusive Livelihoods Program
LoE: Letter of Engagement
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MKSP: Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
MoRD: Ministry of Rural Development
MoU: Memorandum of Understanding
MSY: Maha Samruddhi Yojana
PHC: Public Health Centre
PMU: Project Management Unit
PoP: Poorest of the poor
PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal
PVTG: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group
SC: Scheduled Castes
ST: Scheduled Tribes
SHG: Self-Help Group
SPMU: State Project Management Unit
SRLM: State Rural Livelihoods Mission
VO: Village Organisation

1. Introduction:

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP), formed by ten former senior civil servants with extensive experience in designing and scaling national and state-level social sector initiatives, plays a pivotal role in supporting the Maha Samruddhi Yojana (MSY). CRISP's primary objective is to assist governments in designing or redesigning social sector programmes and policies to enhance their effectiveness and impact.

The Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP) has partnered with BRAC International to provide concurrent evaluation and strategic support for the Inclusive Livelihoods Programmes (ILP) being implemented in Telangana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra for three years. This collaborative initiative seeks to strengthen the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable communities by integrating BRAC's globally recognised Graduation Approach with context-specific strategies to address poverty and promote social inclusion.

In MSY, CRISP's role encompasses a comprehensive concurrent evaluation function, focusing on assessing the performance of the program with respect to its processes, intermediate outputs, and overall effectiveness. The evaluation aims to identify gaps and offer timely recommendations for course corrective actions.

As part of its mandate, CRISP carried out a concurrent evaluation of Phase 1 of the household identification process for program participants in Maharashtra. This evaluation provides timely insights and practical recommendations, serving as a key step in enhancing and strengthening the program's implementation strategy.

2. Program progress so far:

MSY was officially launched on December 9, 2024, by UMED, with BRAC International providing technical support through Indian Grameen Services (IGS). Immediately after the launch, a write shop was organised in Nashik from December 11–13, 2024, where state, district, and partner teams worked together to develop operational guidelines, finalise programme structures, and set out the initial processes for cadre and household selection.

In January 2025, the first set of guidelines on household identification, cadre selection, and fund flow were circulated. During this month, CLFs or Prabhag Sanghs were also oriented in Nashik and Nandurbar to anchor the programme at the cluster level. Mobilization began through Village Organisations (VOs) and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), and preparatory meetings were conducted to introduce the programme and clarify roles.

In February 2025, recruitment for the Sakhi Cadre was initiated. More than 400 applications were received across the two districts. Screening and shortlisting processes were conducted at the block and CLF levels. By March 2025, the final selection was completed, and 94 Sakhis, including

Prabhag Sakhis, were appointed across four CLFs. During the same month, multiple rounds of Training of Trainers (ToT) and residential training programmes were conducted, covering household coaching, *Panchsutri* tools for identification, and field processes.

Between March and May 2025, household identification drives were rolled out in 105 VOs using PRA - Panchasutri which included village visit & first VO meeting, transect walk, social mapping, household survey and final VO meeting for endorsement of EVHHs. The finalised household lists were verified at the CLF, block and district levels. This process concluded with the finalisation of 2,401 extremely vulnerable households (EVHHs)—1,088 in Nashik and 1,313 in Nandurbar. In parallel, work was initiated to prepare guidelines for livelihood planning, household verification formats, and disbursement protocols. Planning for Cohort 2 began during this period in additional CLFs.

From June 2025, the implementation phase commenced. Sakhis began household visits, carrying out the first cycle of coaching sessions with EVHHs. District-level livelihood profiling exercises were completed to map resources, schemes, and opportunities relevant for ultra-poor households. Module 1 trainings were contextualised to the Maharashtra setting and rolled out for translation into marathi which so it can be shared with the sakhis. During the same month, formal District and Block Level Coordination Committees were notified, bringing together multiple line departments to facilitate convergence.

In July 2025, Sakhi recruitment continued in Nashik. In Peth block, 59 candidates were shortlisted, while in Trimbakeshwar, 16 were finalised. Livelihood profiling exercises were extended to cover 171 villages. A pilot household profiling survey was carried out with 200 households, and 148 returnee migrant households were added to the programme database. The discussion on developing a digital MIS system to capture household surveys, profiling, and microplanning was initiated; however, it was later agreed that the SRLM and MSY teams would proceed with the NRLM MIS, which is currently under development. Separate CLF bank accounts were opened to enable fund management under MSY. During this month, utility kit including backpacks, raincoats, umbrellas, and saree were distributed to Sakhis through UMED & CSR support.

By the end of July 2025, MSY had completed its set-up, cadre deployment, and household identification for Cohort 1, while also advancing recruitment, profiling, and MIS preparation for Cohort 2.

3. Methodology

Research Objectives

The concurrent evaluation was conducted with following objectives

1. To assess the system's preparedness and capacity for effective planning, implementation, and management of the program.

2. To gain a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder participation, particularly in the program participant identification process.

Research Design and setting

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to evaluate both the system's preparedness and the inclusiveness of the participant identification process. This included a combination of qualitative and quantitative tools to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the implementation.

To assess system-level readiness, qualitative methods such as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to understand the extent of stakeholder awareness participation. To evaluate the participant identification process, field observations of key PRA exercises and inclusion-exclusion surveys were carried out, specifically aimed to check whether any inclusion or exclusion errors had occurred, ensuring that eligible households were correctly identified and non-eligible households were excluded.

Since the current program ties closely to the NRLM inclusion mandate and has also been approved as a national sub scheme, it becomes important to not only closely monitor the program implementation but also explore deeply aspects of system integration and sustainability of the program. Adopting this approach at the outset, will help highlight challenges with regards to system integration and also address aspects of inclusion that the program is to address. Such that key learnings from the current pilot can inform the state scaling and program adaptation strategies.

Hence, the tools of the study have been bifurcated in two categories, those which are concerned with the immediate program execution i.e. Identification PRA and secondly, tools that look at aspects of system integration and sustainability.

The tools have been divided at all levels of execution – at the State SRLM level to understand more about ongoing initiatives of the SRLMs and their experiences in addressing livelihoods for the vulnerable populations. They also attempt to understand, what initiatives by the Department in livelihoods has worked for the specific geographies.

At the SPMU level, the tool attempts to understand planning and implementation aspects of the program in addition to the various functions they are to undertake in technical aspects including livelihood planning, climate adaptation, gender and MEL. These become relevant to understand aspects of program adaptation taking place at the PMU level.

The third level that tools assess are at Community Institutions, these include the CLFs and VOs, it is important to understand their perspective, and engagement early on in the program to see – how they can contribute effectively to the program. In addition to their engagement with the ILP program, it is important to understand that they are the most important level that needs to be take ownership of this program for its success. Hence the tools attempt to understand the barriers to inclusion of the program participants in the fold of NRLM and also explore ways of meaningfully engaging the community institutions in the program.

Description of Tools

Table 1 and 2 describes the tools that were utilised to capture information across various stakeholders and program processes.

Tool	Description
SRLM Official Guide IBCB & Livelihoods	Understands the department's engagement with vulnerable groups, highlighting challenges and assessing existing livelihood initiatives
SPMU Guide PMU lead	Outlines the team selection process, challenges, SRLM coordination for convergence, and program monitoring, including grievance redressal
M&E Function Guide	Details the M&E framework, fund allocation, review frequency with SRLM, district/block, process documentation, and prioritisation of learning.
District and Block Coordinators Guide	Covers CRP recruitment guidelines, vulnerable group representation, key challenges, and reporting structures, including review mechanisms at the district level. It also addresses data record-keeping, verification processes, and internal reviews.
Coach Selection Checklist	Outlines the recruitment and engagement of coaches, role mapping as per guidelines, representation from vulnerable groups, and key challenges identified.
Community Institutions: FGD Guide	Evaluates the capacity of existing CLFs & VO's to anchor the ILP program, their understanding of target groups, and their role in the identification process, ensuring adherence to guidelines and grievance redressal mechanisms

Table 1: Description of Tools: System Preparedness

Tool	Description
VO Meeting Checklist	This tool assesses the communication of the ILP program, meeting duration and attendance, clarity on inclusion/exclusion errors, clear roles and responsibilities, representation of marginalised groups, and discussion of challenges.
Transect Walk Checklist	This tool evaluates the duration and area covered, team constitution, participation of CRPs/VO members, adherence to guidelines, and identifies any challenges faced
Social Mapping Checklist	This tool assesses the representation of various groups in social mapping, adherence to guidelines, neutrality of location, timely

	provision of materials, issues raised during beneficiary list preparation, and documentation.
Household survey Checklist	This tool checks for inclusion and exclusion errors in selection
VO Endorsement Meeting Checklist	This tool evaluates the representation of VO members, adherence to guidelines, issues related to inclusion/exclusion errors, addition/removal of members, appropriate ranking of households, and documentation
CLF Data Verification	This tool facilitates cross-verification with secondary data and household visits for verification purposes.

Table 2: Description of Tools: Identification (PRA)

Sampling:

1. Village Selection (PRA Processes)

To avoid selection bias at the community level, a random sampling method was applied. This method allowed for unbiased representation of the overall program area and was used to select 22 villages across the four identified blocks for the initial Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) processes.

IDENTIFICATION: PRA Activities				
District Coverage	Block Coverage	Village Coverage	Processes	Processes Coverage
2	4	29	First VO Meeting	4
			Transect Walk	2
			Social Mapping	5
			HH Surveys	38
			Final VO Meeting	12
			Inclusion Surveys	108
			Exclusion Surveys	187
SYSTEM PREPAREDNESS (Coverage across all stakeholders through KIIs & FGDs)				
Functionary	Level			KIIs/FGDs Coverage
SRLM	State, District & Block officials			16
	Village cadre			16

CBOs	CLFs, VOs & GPs	9
SPMU	State, District & Block Coordinators	9

Table 3: Identification Phase 1 (PRA & System Preparedness) coverage

2. Household (HH) Inclusion/Exclusion Error Surveys

The methodology for assessing inclusion and exclusion errors was designed to target and measure potential flaws in the primary household identification process:

Study Design and Setting

The survey followed a cross-sectional descriptive design, aimed at assessing key parameters across inclusion and exclusion for selected villages within multiple blocks. The study was conducted in following blocks of Peth, and Trimbakeshwar in Nashik, & Akrani and Akkalkuwa of Nandurbar in Maharashtra.

Target participants for this program include women (single, widowed, divorced, abandoned, destitute, *Kumari Matas*, survivors of domestic violence, or those heading households), individuals from SC/ST/OBC/PVTG groups, the landless, migrant workers, and those with disabilities or chronic illnesses who are the sole earning members, as well as transgenders. Selection will prioritise families that experience food insecurity for 2-3 days monthly, have an annual income below ₹25,000, are landless or have low land productivity, suffer from chronic health issues, lack any source of income, are deprived of other government entitlements, have disabled earning member, or have migrated for over four months; participants must generally be between 18 and 60 years old (subject to relaxation in exceptional cases).

Sampling Approach

The total number of households to be sampled was derived from the final lists shared by the SPMU. A **5–10% sampling fraction** was consistently applied to these lists to guarantee sufficient representation of both inclusion and exclusion cases.

Sample Calculation	Total	Nashik	Nandurbar
Total Rejected HHs (Exclusion errors)	2,091	1,394	697
10% Sample	210	140	70
Total Selected HHs (Inclusion errors)	2,373	1,060	1,313
5% Sample	119	52	67

Table 4: Sample calculation

Based on the above calculation, the target coverage was set at **210 rejected households** (for exclusion checks) and **119 selected households** (for inclusion checks) across Nashik and Nandurbar districts.

Selection of Villages

Villages within each block were purposively selected based on two key considerations. First, villages that had a higher number of rejected households compared to selected households were prioritised to enable a better understanding of exclusion errors. Second, operational feasibility, including factors such as accessibility and proximity to the block headquarters, was taken into account to ensure smooth and efficient field implementation. Finally, the HHs were selected randomly to avoid bias.

Village Coverage: 7 additional villages were covered for the purpose of the surveys, making the count of the total villages covered under the study at 29 villages.

Data Collection Process

The inclusion–exclusion surveys were conducted using a structured questionnaire designed to identify both inclusion and exclusion errors. The tool captured key socio-economic and vulnerability indicators relevant to the MSY program. Prior to fieldwork, CRISP field teams underwent a two-day training, which covered an overview of the MSY program, distinctions between poor and ultra-poor households, household scoring criteria, research ethics, and data collection procedures. The training also included practical sessions on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods. Following the training, the CRISP field team visited the selected households and conducted interviews with either the primary program participant or another available adult household member. The survey was completed within 10 days across both districts.

Data Quality Assurance:

To ensure data quality and accuracy, the CRISP team closely supervised fieldwork across selected locations. Daily debriefing sessions were conducted to review field challenges, address tool-related queries, and ensure consistency and reliability in data collection procedures.

Data Analysis:

Data collection was done manually and data was subsequently entered and analysed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed to summarise household-level information and assess the extent of inclusion and exclusion errors.

Verification and Classification

To validate the household selection process, both included and excluded households were examined through the survey. Slight variance in the no. of households covered as part of the study is observed, as due to very heavy rains, data collection had to be halted in the Nandurbar district. The table below summarises the overall findings:

District	Surveys of Selected HHs (Inclusion Error)	Surveys of Rejected HHs (Exclusion Error)
Nandurbar	22 surveyed; 0 non-eligible inclusion; 22 rightfully included	17 surveyed; 14 eligible exclusions; 1 rightfully excluded; 2 borderline cases
Nashik	86 surveyed; 2 non-eligible inclusion; 76 rightfully included; 8 borderline cases	170 surveyed; 122 eligible exclusions; 21 rightfully excluded; 27 borderline cases
Total	108 households	187 households

Table 5: HHs covered under the surveys

Scoring Framework:

The CRISP inclusion and exclusion surveys adopted the same household scoring system developed by the PMU for the PRA household surveys to ensure methodological consistency. Each

household was assessed on a 20-point scale, with Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) households receiving two additional points, bringing their total to 22.

The following scoring framework was considered for the selection of households:

- a) 8 or above: Mandatorily selected.
- b) 6–7 were reviewed by the Village Organisation (VO) for a final decision on inclusion or exclusion.
- c) 5 or below were excluded, except in special cases such as Extremely Vulnerable Households (EVHHs) where the VO made the final decision.

This standardised scoring system maintained alignment between the initial PRA-based household surveys and the subsequent inclusion–exclusion verification process undertaken by CRISP.

Way Forward for Identification Phase II:

To ensure the completion of the identification cycle, certain pending PRA activities and household surveys will be conducted during Phase II, scheduled for the October–December period. This phase is designed to cover the shortfall from Phase I and finalise the preliminary identification list. The specific targets for completion are detailed below:

SL. no.	Process	Number
1	First VO Meetings	16
2	Transect walks	16
3	Social Mapping	15
4	Household Survey	16
5	Final VO Meetings	10
6	Inclusion Exclusion Surveys	300

Table 6:Phase Concurrent Evaluation Targets

4. Identification Findings:

As part of the concurrent evaluation, the CRISP team observed and participated in a series of community engagement activities across two districts—Nashik and Nandurbar in the Phase I household identification process. These activities, including first VO meetings, transect walks, social mapping exercises, household surveys, VO endorsement meetings were aimed at identifying extremely vulnerable households and ensuring inclusive and transparent processes for targeting the poorest of the poor (PoP). In addition to this, CRISP also conducted household level inclusion exclusion surveys to understand if the households have been selected as per the guidelines and to understand any variances and objectivity in the identification process.

The exercises were conducted in a participatory way, involving community members, village organisation members, ILP Coaches - Samruddhi Sakhis and Cluster Samruddhi Sakhis, and block and district coordinators. This section attempts to provide a detailed activity-wise analysis of the observations, challenges, and recommendations for each observed PRA activity.

Below is a summary of the locations and activities observed as part of the Identification

Phase 1- PRA exercises

District	Block	Village / Hamlet
First VO Meeting		
Nashik	Peth	Jale
		Mhasgan
		Kalambari
	Trimbakeshwar	Hiwale
Transect Walk		
Nashik	Trimbakeshwar	Hiwale
	Peth	Kalambari
Social Mapping		
Nashik	Peth	Hathrundi
		Shivshet
	Trimbakeshwar	Berwal
		Ozarkhed
		Hiwale
Household Surveys		
Nandurbar	Akkalkuwa	Kukdipadar
	Akrani	Nigti
Nashik	Peth	Ambe
		Junoti

Final VO Meeting (Endorsement)		
Nandurbar	Akrani	Vadphali
		Khadakla
	Akkalkuwa	Khodaspar
		Balaghat
Nashik	Peth	Dhondmal
		Palshi
		Ambe
		Shivshet
	Trimbakeshwar	Gawtha
		Raite
		Karanjkhed
		Khirkheda

Table 7: District-wise PRA Activities covered - Identification Phase 1

First VO Meeting:

Overview

A total of four first VO meetings were observed across two districts —Nashik and Nandurbar. In the first Village Organization (VO) meeting held under the Maha Samruddhi Yojana (MSY), the VO office bearers and members come together along with the Samruddhi Sakhi to initiate the identification process in the village. During this meeting, the Sakhi shares detailed information about the MSY, its objectives, and the upcoming Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) activities such as social mapping, transect walks, and household surveys. A potential list of Poorest of the Poor (PoP) households is also made during this meeting, based on the initial understanding of the VO members. Towards the end of the meeting, the VO office bearers are expected to nominate 2–3 active VO members to accompany and support the Sakhi during these activities, along with the assigned I-CRP. After the meeting, the Samruddhi Sakhi is also required to reach out separately to the village Sarpanch to inform them about the MSY process and extend an invitation to participate in the social mapping and VO endorsement meetings. This initial VO meeting sets the foundation for building local ownership and cooperation throughout the identification process.

Observations

- **Variation in VO engagement:** VOs situated closer to block offices showing higher levels of participation, better understanding of poverty concepts, and greater confidence in discussions, compared to those located farther away.
- **VO Involvement:** Most VO members were receptive and participated and extended their cooperation to the teams, ensuring a collaborative process.
- **Duration:** The duration of first VO meetings varied from 40 minutes to up to 1.5 hours days,

depending on the geographical spread and population size of the villages.

- **I-CRP Role:** Internal - Community Resource Persons (I-CRPs) during some instances helped to better engage the group for the list preparation.
- **Community Awareness:** In most of the villages, the Samruddhi Sakhi introduced the MSY very well as well as the selection criteria and the difference between poor and poorest of the poor.

Challenges

- **Limited Prior Exposure to Concepts:** In many cases, the Samruddhi Sakhi was introducing the program and its concepts, such as identification of the poor and Poorest of the Poor (PoP), selection criteria to the VO for the first time. Since VO office bearers and I-CRPs were not present during the Sakhi training, they lacked prior exposure to these concepts, which limited their understanding and ability to engage meaningfully in the process.
- **Facilitation Challenges with External Sakhis:** In the observed first VO meetings of Jale and Mhasgan villages, having the Sakhi come from outside created challenges for facilitation. The limited familiarity made it more difficult for VO members to engage with her, which in turn affected rapport-building, participation, and the openness of discussions.
- **Limited Representation in Meetings:** In all four VO meetings it was observed that participation was uneven by VO leadership and members, with poor representation from smaller hamlets. Seasonal factors such as agricultural work, Gharkul construction, weddings, heavy rains, and even migration of VO members and office bearers for work also affected attendance.
- **Gaps in VO Capacity:** VO leadership capacity appeared limited, as many groups had irregular meetings, one VO had not met for 3–4 years, while other three VOs held “monthly” meetings only after several months, making sustained engagement difficult. In four observed VO meetings, open dialogue was limited, and members often hesitated to voice concerns or challenge decisions, highlighting the need for stronger facilitation.

Transect Walk

Overview

Two transect walk exercises were observed - one in Hiwale village of Trimbakeshwar block and the other in Kalambari village of Peth block, both located in Nashik District. The transect walk aims to walk with the villagers through all streets, village boundaries, and areas where the poorest of the poor reside. This process helps the team gain a deeper understanding of high-poverty zones, the lifestyle and occupations of the people, and their social conditions. It plays a crucial role in identifying the most vulnerable families and their residential locations and contributes significantly

to ensuring accuracy and inclusiveness in the subsequent social mapping exercise.



Figure 1: Transect walk in Nashik

Observations

- **VO Involvement:** VO members were involved in the process, providing support and engagement.
- **Duration:** The duration of transect walks varied from six to eight hours, depending on the geographical spread and population size of the villages.
- **Infrastructure Coverage:** Teams visited key public infrastructure, including Jal Jeevan Mission handpumps, community water tanks, wells, Anganwadi centres, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), religious structures (temples) and Gram Panchayat offices.
- **Community Awareness:** During the walks, villagers were informed about upcoming social mapping sessions, including details on date, time, and location.

Challenges

- **Limited scope of transect walks:** During the transect walk, the Sakhis and CRPs focused on observing and identifying key village infrastructure. Activities such as assessing issues related to roads, health, education, water, agriculture, and other basic amenities, gathering information on village institutions, and conducting community discussions were not carried out as per guidelines.
- **Lack of uniform village coverage:** The identification team primarily focused on

households already listed as potential PoP from the first VO meeting, which resulted in limited coverage of remote hamlets and the possible exclusion of households.

- **Lack of familiarity of communities during transect walks:** The Samruddhi Sakhis, being from other villages, organised the transect walks in villages they were not familiar with, with only one or two VO-nominated members accompanying them.

Social Mapping:

Overview



Figure 2: Social Mapping activity in Nashik

Social mapping exercises were observed in five villages across Nashik district, including Hathrundi and Shivshet in Peth block, as well as Berwal, Ozarkhed, and Hiwale in Trimbakeshwar block. This is a community-led participatory process aimed at identifying vulnerable households for accurate targeting of the poorest of the poor, while also mapping the village's socio-economic conditions, infrastructure, and resources.

Observations

- **Preparatory briefings:** Prior to the social mapping sessions, Block or District Coordinators oriented the identification teams by clearly outlining the objective, criteria for identifying vulnerability, and the roles of various participants.
- **SS facilitation:** Samruddhi Sakhis facilitated the mapping exercises by guiding community members in drawing maps and marking housing structures. They made effective use of materials, ensuring the process was conducted smoothly and efficiently.
- **Location accessibility:** The social mapping activities were conducted in easily accessible

community spaces like primary schools or temples, promoting inclusivity and encouraging participation.

- **Community involvement:** The process saw involvement from VO members, I-CRPs, GP representatives, and community members, who all contributed to identifying vulnerable households.
- **UMED oversight:** In one out of the five social mapping exercise, the cluster coordinator (CC) was present to observe and support the exercise, lending greater legitimacy to the process.
- **Documentation:** The Samruddhi Sakhi team recorded the final social map on chart paper as well as an A4 sheet and maintained it a dedicated MSY folder at the Village Organisation (VO) level.

Challenges

- **Timing and seasonal constraints:** In four out of five villages, the timing of the activity coincided with agricultural work, Gharkul construction, and the wedding season, resulting in low overall participation. Women, youth, and residents of remote hamlets were particularly underrepresented.
- **Limited geographic representation:** In all five observed social mapping exercises, most participants who attended were from hamlets closest to the venue, limiting their knowledge of more distant settlements. As a result, the settlements of forest-dwelling and migratory groups were often excluded from the mapping exercise.
- **Participant fatigue:** In all five observed social mapping exercises, the process was time-consuming, which led to participant fatigue and reduced engagement throughout the activity
- **Limited involvement of key stakeholders:** In only one out of the five observed social mapping exercises were GP members and the full VO leadership present, and their limited involvement reduced the perceived legitimacy of the exercise.
- **Dominance of certain voices:** In all five observed social mapping exercises, power dynamics shaped the discussions, often amplifying the perspectives of dominant groups while marginalised voices were less heard, which may affect the program's ability to accurately identify and address the needs of all community members.
- **Documentation gaps:** Although important observations, such as caste-based clustering, access barriers, and the location of vulnerable households, emerged during discussions, these insights were not consistently recorded. The maps and records mainly highlighted easily identifiable characteristics, such as widow households in a different colour or PVTG households.

Household Surveys:

Overview

A total of 38 household surveys were observed across four villages, including Kukdipadar in Akkalkuwa block and Nigti in Dhadgaon block of Nandurbar district, as well as Ambe and Junoti in Peth block of Nashik district. After the initial identification through social mapping, the identification team conducts household visits to verify and document the socio-economic conditions of listed families, ensuring only the most eligible are selected under the MSY.



Figure 3: Household Survey in Nandurbar

Observations:

- **Team composition:** Teams typically included the VO nominated members, I-CRP and Samruddhi Sakhi.
- **Sensitive approach:** Teams adopted a friendly and sensitive approach, fostering trust and encouraging residents to share information openly.
- **Visit duration:** Visits typically lasted approximately 20–25 minutes, allowing for data collection and start of a meaningful household level engagement.
- **Non-participant follow-up:** For households absent during social mapping, some teams collected contact information from neighbours and coordinated with the VO to ensure inclusion during the household surveys.

Challenges

- **Survey Team Composition and Verification:** In nine household survey visits, the visits were conducted by a single team member, usually the Samruddhi Sakhi, which limited opportunities for proper data verification. Initially, all team members participated, but as

the surveys progressed, VO-nominated members left to attend to other work.

- **Timing and scheduling constraints:** In more than 20 cases, surveys were frequently rushed due to poor timing or competing priorities of the household, such as agricultural work or Gharkul-related responsibilities.
- **Geographic and accessibility challenges:** In nine instances, the remoteness or difficult terrain of many hamlets, combined with pressure to meet fixed targets within a short timeframe, demotivated Sakhis, especially those working alone, and often led to household visits being completed more quickly than ideal, compromising the quality of engagement. In some cases, Sakhis from other villages had to return home using limited transport options, such as a single bus at a specific time, which forced them to pause or cut short the process.
- **Trust and social barriers:** In certain cases, households withheld information when the Samruddhi Sakhi was from a different village, tribe, or social group, leading to challenges in trust-building and affecting the accuracy of the data collected.
- **Consent and communication gaps:** In all observed instances, informed verbal or written consent was not taken and households were not clearly communicated about the purpose of the data collection.
- **Language and comprehension issues:** All 38 household surveys experienced challenges related to language. The use of formal Marathi in the survey forms created confusion and limited understanding among potential program participants and at times amongst the Sakhis themselves.
- **Data quality and accuracy concerns:** In 12 instances, misreporting, self-exclusion, and inclusion errors were observed due to poor comprehension of survey questions, external influence, or weak facilitation.

VO Endorsement Meetings:

Overview



Figure 4: VO Endorsement meeting in Nandurbar

Twelve VO endorsement meetings were observed across two districts: Vadphali, Khadakla, Khodaspar, and Balaghat in Nandurbar district, and Dhondmal, Palshi, Ambe, Shivshet, Gawtha, Raite, Karanjkhed, and Khirkheda in Nashik district. These meetings aimed to validate the list of PoP households, promote community ownership, and ensure transparency.

Observations

- **Structured process:** Meetings followed a standard structure, with the purpose and PoP selection criteria explained, followed by a public reading of the household list and open discussions to address concerns.
- **Participatory decision-making:** Final decisions on household inclusion or exclusion were made collectively with VO members.
- **Documentation:** Samruddhi Sakhis documented identified and rejected households in a register.

Challenges

- **Absence of key stakeholders:** In 10 out of 12 instances, key members from both the VO leadership and Gram Panchayat were absent, primarily due to lack of prior communication or limited involvement, which weakened the reliability of the household lists being finalised.
- **Incomplete participation during meetings:** In all 10 endorsement meetings, VO members left the meetings before all forms could be discussed, either after their own hamlet's households had been covered or because the meeting extended for too long, affecting the completeness and inclusiveness of the process.
- **Poor representation & limited household knowledge:** The method of calling out household names during the endorsement meetings proved to be of limited use. In 10 out of 12 endorsement meetings, limited representation from distant hamlets, along with many VO office bearers being unfamiliar with households beyond their immediate surroundings, resulted in endorsements being made without direct knowledge of the families.
- **Reliance on MSY team and VO capacity gaps:** MSY team played a key role in the facilitation only in one VO meeting out of the 12 meetings. There was a general lack of clarity among VO members regarding their roles in the selection process, with many struggling to distinguish between poor and the poorest households, perceiving most families in their area as similarly disadvantaged. In eight meetings, to avoid conflict or pressure from villagers, VO members opted for blanket inclusion of households, highlighting the need for targeted capacity building to strengthen their understanding, confidence, and decision-making skills within the group and the wider community.
- **Inconsistent application of selection criteria:** Selection criteria such as age, asset ownership, and visible entitlements were applied inconsistently. In some cases, the criteria were enforced too rigidly, resulting in the exclusion of households that technically qualified but did not fit narrow interpretations. In other instances, the rules were applied too loosely, allowing households with relatively better resources or entitlements to be included, leading to over-inclusion, leading to both exclusion and over-inclusion errors. This highlighted the need to clearly spell out exclusion criteria.
- **Uneven participation and seasonal constraints:** Participation across all the observed VO endorsement meetings was uneven, with limited representation from smaller or remote hamlets. Attendance was further affected by seasonal factors, many community members were busy with agricultural work, Gharkul construction, weddings, or were unable to attend due to heavy rains. In some cases, even VO members had migrated for work, leading to gaps in representation and decision-making during the meetings.
- **Documentation and procedural clarity:** Across 12 VO endorsement meetings, recording practices were uneven, particularly for recording reasons for rejection of households.

Samruddhi Sakhis, many of whom had limited prior experience with such processes, struggled with procedural clarity and documentation, especially when managing these responsibilities independently for the first time.

Inclusion and Exclusion Surveys:

Overview

The household inclusion and exclusion surveys formed a central component of Phase I of the identification process. These surveys were designed to apply the eligibility criteria at the household level and generate a verified list of selected and rejected households across villages. The process aimed to ensure that only the poorest and most vulnerable households were identified, while minimising inclusion and exclusion errors.

Village-Wise Coverage of Selected and Rejected Households				
District	Block	Village	Rejected HHs	Selected HHs
Nashik	Peth	Aad	60	14
		Kohor	54	26
	Trimbakeshwar	Chirapali	35	15
		Saraste	16	0
		Harsul	5	31
Nandurbar	Akrani	Kakarda	13	12
	Akkalkuwa	Bijarigahvan	4	10
Grand Total			187	108

Table 8: Village-wise Inclusion and Exclusion Surveys conducted during Identification Phase I

The table presents data on households that were either selected for inclusion or rejected during program surveys, organised by district, block, and village. The surveys covered two districts - Nashik and Nandurbar, across multiple blocks and villages.

In Nashik district, two blocks were surveyed: Peth and Trimbakeshwar. Within Peth block, the villages included were Aad (60 rejected, 14 selected) and Kohor (54 rejected, 26 selected). Within Trimbakeshwar block, the villages surveyed were Chirapali (35 rejected, 15 selected), Saraste (16 rejected, 0 selected), and Harsul (5 rejected, 31 selected).

In Nandurbar district, two blocks were covered: Akrani and Akkalkuwa. Within Akrani block, the village Kakarda was surveyed (13 rejected, 12 selected), and within Akkalkuwa block, the village Bijarigahvan was surveyed (4 rejected, 10 selected).

The villages were purposefully selected based on two criteria: first, they had higher numbers of rejected households compared to selected households, ensuring that exclusion errors could be

studied in detail; second, practical considerations such as proximity to the block office and accessibility were considered for logistical convenience.

Across all surveyed villages, a total of 187 households were rejected, and 108 households were selected, reflecting variations in inclusion and exclusion patterns across locations.

Observations:

<u>Surveys of Selected Households</u>		<u>Surveys of Rejected Households</u>	
<u>(Inclusion Error)</u>		<u>(Exclusion Error)</u>	
Nandurbar			
Households surveyed	22	Households surveyed	17
Non-Eligible Inclusion	0	Rightfully Excluded	1
Rightfully Included	22	Eligible Exclusion	14
Borderline cases	0	Borderline cases	2
Nashik			
Households surveyed	86	Households surveyed	170
Non-Eligible Inclusion	2	Rightfully Excluded	21
Rightfully Included	76	Eligible Exclusion	122
Borderline cases	8	Borderline cases	27
Total	108	Total	187

Table 9: Breakup of Inclusion and Exclusion Surveys

The above-mentioned table presents the findings from household surveys conducted to verify both selected (inclusion error) and rejected (exclusion error) households across Nandurbar and Nashik districts. The following explains the key categories used in the inclusion and exclusion survey results to clarify how households were classified:

- Households surveyed: Total number of households visited and assessed during the verification surveys.
- Non-eligible inclusion: Households included in the program despite not meeting eligibility criteria.
- Rightfully included: Households included in the program that were deemed eligible.

- Rightfully excluded: Households rejected from the program that were deemed ineligible.
- Eligible exclusion: Households rejected from the program that were eligible, representing exclusion errors.
- Borderline cases: Households where eligibility was unclear and require further reassessment by Sakhis and the VO.

The scoring pattern provided by the PMU which was used during the PRA- household surveys and later guided the VO in deciding which households to include or exclude was followed in CRISP's inclusion – exclusion surveys as well.

Under the MSY household survey scoring system, each household was assessed out of a total of 20 points and 22 points in case of the PVTG households (who were given additional 2 points). The scoring criteria was as follows:

- Score 8 or above: Must be selected
- Score 6-7: VO to decide whether to include or exclude the HH.
- Score 5 or below: HH to be excluded, except in special cases such as EVHH, where VOs take the final decision.

Inclusion Surveys:

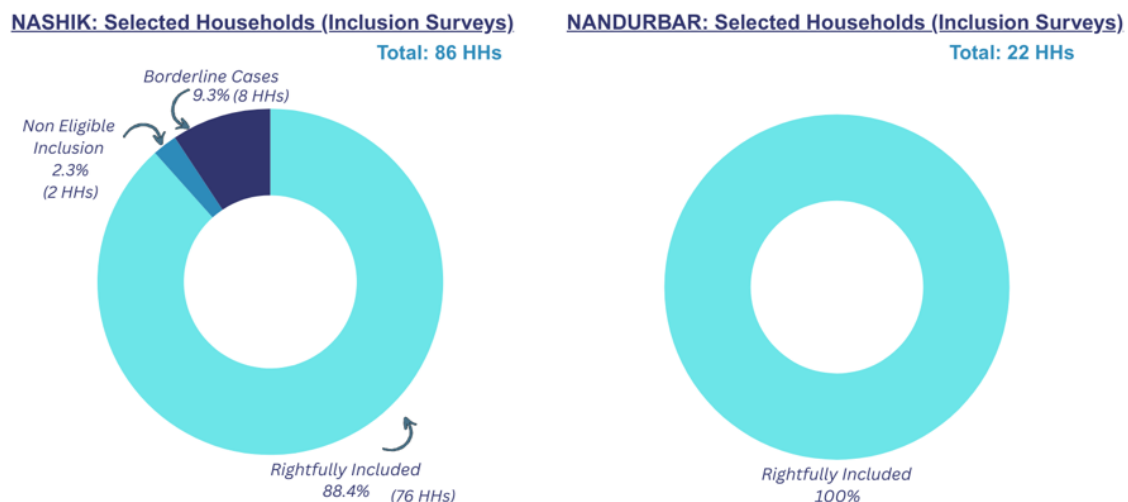


Figure 5: Inclusion Surveys - Nashik & Nandurbar

In Nandurbar, 22 selected households were surveyed, and all were rightfully included, indicating no inclusion errors in the sample. In Nashik, 86 selected households were surveyed, of which 76 households (88%) were rightfully included. Two households (2%) were non-eligible inclusions, and eight households (9%) were identified as borderline cases, reflecting uncertainty in the selection process.

In the inclusion surveys using qualitative methods, some gaps were noted such as

1. **Duplication of household entries:** Nine such cases were noted— two where the same household appeared more than once in the list, and seven where the same household/chulha had multiple entries, leading to more than one beneficiary from the household. This not only inflated the numbers but also diverted resources and attention away from genuinely vulnerable families, undermining efficiency.
2. **Inclusion of households with productive land or other assets:** There were five instances where households owning productive land, livestock, or other significant assets were included, despite not fitting the criteria for the poorest of the poor. Such inclusions risk diluting the program’s resources and may create resentment among excluded households who are objectively more vulnerable.
3. **Automatic inclusion of some non-PoP PVTG households:** In some villages, majority of the households belonging to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) were automatically included, regardless of their actual socio-economic condition. While this approach was likely motivated by a desire to prevent exclusion of historically marginalised groups, it also led to the participation of families who may not require the same level of support.

Exclusion Surveys:

NASHIK: Rejected Households (Exclusion Surveys)

Total: 170 HHs



NANDURBAR: Rejected Households (Exclusion Surveys)

Total: 17 HHs

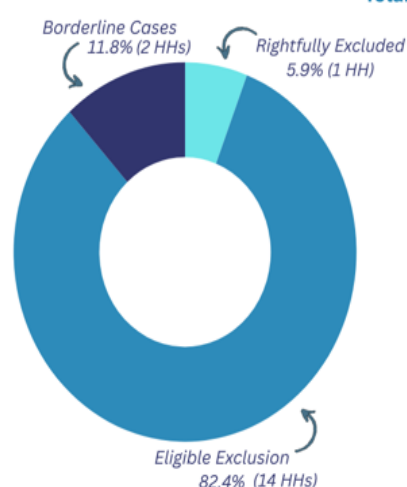


Figure 6 Exclusion Surveys - Nashik & Nandurbar

Among 170 rejected households surveyed in Nashik, only 21 (12%) were rightfully excluded, whereas 122 households (72%) were eligible for inclusion. Twenty-seven households (16%) were

borderline cases requiring reassessment by the Sakhi with the VO, likely involving household visits to ensure accurate inclusion decisions.

In Nandurbar, for rejected households, 17 surveys were conducted. Among these, only one household was rightfully excluded, while 14 households (82%) were found to be eligible for inclusion, highlighting significant exclusion errors. Additionally, two households (12%) were categorised as borderline cases, requiring reassessment by the VO, potentially through household visits, to decide on inclusion on a case-by-case basis.

In the exclusion surveys using qualitative methods, following gaps were noted:

- **Migration-related coverage issues:** In many villages, a substantial number of households were engaged in seasonal migration for work, particularly during the survey period. This meant that when survey teams visited, these households were absent and thus not assessed directly and were simply left out of the lists. This disproportionately affected migrant families, who are often among the most vulnerable due to unstable incomes, lack of access to social entitlements in destination areas, and limited representation in village institutions.
- **Limited time and coverage capacity:** Exclusions also occurred because of incomplete field coverage or lack of awareness within Village Organisations. In some cases, Samruddhi Sakhis were unable to reach specific households, while in others the VO had limited knowledge about certain families' circumstances. As a result, leaving vulnerable households at risk of exclusion.
- **Limitations in verification:** The intended 10% verification was limited to a list review by the CLFs. During verification by the MSY team and UMED officials, the process primarily focused on selected households, with no review of rejected households to assess the potential for wrongful exclusions. This approach restricted the effectiveness of verification and may have left misclassified households uncorrected.
- **Procedural lapses:** Field verification revealed further procedural gaps. In one instance, two households were excluded altogether because the Sakhi conducted only a telephonic check and failed to complete the survey forms. In another case, confusion over a participant's name led to exclusion: in one hamlet, a woman with the name was from an extremely vulnerable household, but the VO mistakenly assumed it referred to another woman with the same name who was relatively better-off.
- **Varying facilitator capacity (language, biases, concept understanding etc.):** The ability of Samruddhi Sakhis to conduct surveys was influenced by factors such as their language skills, level of comfort with technical concepts, and personal biases. In some cases, where the Sakhi was not fluent in the local dialect, communication gaps emerged that limited the household's ability to fully express their situation. Similarly, inconsistent understanding of survey concepts, errors in filling scores, and differences in how questions were posed to households led to uneven application of the scoring criteria. Facilitators were also

influenced by their own perceptions of what constitutes poverty, unintentionally sidelining households that may have met the official criteria, directly impacting the accuracy of the exclusion process.

- **Assumptions made due to familiarity:** In cases where Sakhis or VO members often belonged to the same village or nearby areas, they sometimes relied on their personal knowledge or impressions of households instead of conducting a detailed assessment compromising the objectivity of the process. This familiarity bias led to assumptions about who was "poor enough" or "too well-off," without verifying the actual conditions of the household. For example, some families were rejected because they were perceived to be supported by migrant relatives or extended kin, even though remittances were irregular or insufficient to sustain them.
- **Exclusions linked to non-uniform application of age criteria:** Although the program guidelines allow participants from households with members in the 50–60 age group, many such households were rejected despite meeting the required score in the household survey conducted by the identification team. This stemmed from a biased perception that older participants would be unable to work, even when other eligible female members of the household could have participated. This rigid interpretation overlooked household realities and excluded deserving families.
- **Exclusions linked to entitlements:** Households possessing formal entitlements, such as Aadhaar Cards, were sometimes rejected outright. However, many of these households faced errors in their documents, such as incorrect names or ages, or had lost their cards, or had them held by officials or middlemen. Despite technically holding entitlements, these families were unable to access benefits, yet their presence on paper was treated as an indicator of better-off status.

Out of 187 rejected households surveyed across both districts, 122 households (65%) were found to be eligible for the program, indicating significant exclusion errors. Nashik showed higher levels of both inclusion and exclusion errors compared to Nandurbar, though this was partly due to a larger survey sample in Nashik and operational challenges that limited coverage in Nandurbar. Additionally, the CRISP team identified five households (2 in Nashik and 3 in Nandurbar) that were never surveyed but were eligible as per the criteria, of which two were not migrating households, further reinforcing the need for better monitoring.

The presence of borderline cases across both districts' points to the need for careful reassessment by Sakhis together with the VO, emphasising the importance of stronger VO capacity, need for stronger inclusion and exclusion criteria's, and systematic verification of households that were rejected or missed during the initial process to ensure that the most vulnerable households are included in future phases.

Recommendations:

Activity	Recommendations
First VO Meeting	1. Clarity of VO's Role and Responsibilities • In the first VO meeting, it is recommended to clearly define the role of VOs in the identification process. • VO Members could be oriented on their responsibilities and on how their participation will contribute to a fair and transparent selection. • A key part of this orientation would be facilitated discussions on Extremely Vulnerable Households (EVHHs), including: what constitutes an EVHH. • The inclusion and exclusion criteria to be applied. • These discussions should be detailed and participatory, allowing members adequate time for questions, clarifications, and reflections. • To support comprehension, facilitators might use local language resources and visual aids, such as: Picture cards illustrating household situations, simple role-play exercises etc 2. Capacity Building and Facilitation Support • Prior to the first VO meeting, it is recommended that VO office bearers (OBs) participate in all Samruddhi Sakhi trainings to strengthen their own conceptual understanding. • These training could place particular emphasis on soft facilitation skills, such as active listening, empathetic engagement, encouraging broader participation, and effectively navigating conflicts. • The first VO meeting may also focus on establishing an open and respectful environment for dialogue. • The presence of UMED officials and cadres, particularly I-CRPs, can help foster a sense of safety where members feel comfortable expressing their views. • Through mentoring and handholding, Samruddhi Sakhis and I-CRPs could model participatory and respectful discussion practices, building the confidence of VO leaders and members to sustain such approaches in future meetings.

	3. Inclusive Participation and Representation • The first VO meeting can also emphasise the importance of broad and inclusive participation. • The meetings can be rotated across hamlets from the outset, ensuring greater accessibility and visibility for underrepresented areas. • VO office bearers, with support from I-CRPs, could actively reach out to households in less-represented hamlets, encouraging their members to participate.
Transect Walk	1. Enhancing Planning and Community Involvement: • Plan transect walks in coordination with the community, mandatorily including VO leadership, Anganwadi, ASHA workers and CBO representatives, to determine suitable timings and routes. • Conduct walks during daylight hours to ensure better visibility and cover more ground, especially in spread-out or forested areas. • Have Samruddhi Sakhis and I-CRPs lead the planning process in consultation with community members. • Engage VO office bearers to raise awareness and mobilise participation. 2. Ensuring Diverse Community Representation: • Include villagers, especially elders, women, youth, and those with local knowledge, to guide the identification team during the walk. • Ensure representation from all hamlets, particularly smaller or remote settlements, and include members from CBOs and women's collectives. • Engage I-CRPs and CCs to help secure diverse participation, with VO leaders supporting in identifying and inviting participants. 3. Strengthening Identification Teams and Mandating Presence of Community Frontline Workers: • Ensure coordination between Samruddhi Sakhis, VO members, and frontline workers such as ASHAs and Anganwadi staff. • Leverage their knowledge of local households to identify

	vulnerable families or hard-to-reach areas. • Have Sakhis proactively engage with these functionaries in advance. • Enable I-CRPs and CCs to support schedule alignment and resolve conflicts from overlapping commitments. 4. Standardised Documentation for Transect Walks • Standardise documentation across all villages by training Sakhis and providing simple formats to record observations consistently. • List households that are locked or unavailable separately, with a clear follow-up plan. • Have I-CRPs and CCs support Sakhis in maintaining and updating these lists. • Enable block-level project teams to monitor documentation quality and ensure no households are missed.
Social Mapping	1. Inclusion and Representation • Ensure participation from diverse groups in the village, including women, youth, vulnerable households, and residents of remote hamlets. • Anganwadi, ASHA workers, I-CRPs and Cluster Coordinators (CCs) should actively mobilise these groups and support Samruddhi Sakhis in facilitating inclusive discussions. • VO office bearers (OBs) should encourage underrepresented sections of the community to take part. • Sakhis must ensure that all voices are heard during the mapping exercise. 2. Public validation of Social Maps: • Organise an open meeting in a common village space (e.g., school or temple) to display the draft map for community review. • Invite community members who missed the initial mapping to verify information, suggest corrections, and highlight missing households or hamlets. • I-CRPs and CCs should coordinate logistics and facilitate discussions, while VO leaders and community elders mobilise participation and address concerns. • Sakhis should present the map clearly and update it based on

	community feedback, ensuring the final version reflects the lived realities of all village sections. 3. UMED Cadre Support and Oversight • CCs and block-level staff should regularly monitor progress, provide timely guidance, and resolve field-level issues. • I-CRPs should support Sakhis in facilitation and ensure adherence to the mapping protocol. • SRLM or PMU staff, should observe select sessions to maintain quality standards. 4. Standardised Documentation • Sakhis should record observations consistently, including caste/tribe clustering, access-related issues, missing hamlets, and the location of vulnerable households. • Sakhis are responsible for maintaining records at the VO level. The MSY project team must provide structured templates and review samples periodically. • Digitisation of information at each level can be taken up by the MSY block coordinator.
Household Surveys	1. Recruitment of Sakhis • Recruit female Sakhis from the same or nearby villages to enhance trust and comfort during household interactions. • Prioritise candidates with experience in community-based organizations (CBOs) to ensure familiarity with local structures and processes. • VO leaders and I-CRPs should support the identification of eligible Sakhis in their villages and encourage their active participation in the program. 2. Training and Capacity Building • Conduct practical, in person, field-based training sessions that go beyond theoretical orientation. • Allocate dedicated time during Sakhi training to review survey formats in detail and clarify doubts, reducing conceptual issues during field implementation. • Since many Sakhis come from diverse social and geographic backgrounds with different languages, assigning location-specific local trainers can provide tailored support.

	• MSY team could consider providing Sakhis with bite-sized audio-visual training resources that they can easily refer to while conducting fieldwork. • CCBs from the MSY team, should develop informal refresher modules that can be used during ongoing fieldwork and adapted to address local challenges. 3. Survey Team Structure • Form survey teams of adequate size such that there is role division. For example, at least two to three members to divide roles such as facilitating conversations, recording data, and managing group dynamics amongst themselves. • VO members and Sakhis should coordinate with the UMED cadre to organize well-structured field teams. 4. Field Support and Mentoring • Survey teams should be trained to navigate language differences, cultural nuances, and varying respondent comfort levels. • I-CRPs and local resource persons should mentor survey teams during fieldwork, supporting effective facilitation and accurate data collection.
VO Endorsement Meeting	• Proper documentation practices must be established to maintain a clear record of households considered during the identification process at the end of each PRA activity. In cases where households are not included in the final list, whether due to unavailability during the survey, refusal to participate, or removal following community feedback, the specific reason should be documented. This not only creates a transparent audit trail but also enables these households to be reconsidered in future phases if circumstances change or new information becomes available. • Building confidence for open discussion among community members and VO leadership requires consistent investment in periodic orientation sessions. These orientations should not only clarify the objectives and principles of the MSY but also create a safe and supportive space where all members, especially those from more vulnerable or less vocal groups, feel

	encouraged to speak. Secondary Source of verification with VO/GP records, since in line with CRISP's observation that that inclusion as well as exclusion errors occurred in the absence of such a mechanism.
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Table 10: Recommendations for Identification - PRA Activities

Findings: System Preparedness

The section of the study engaged a wide range of stakeholders through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to ensure comprehensive coverage across different levels of the system. Interactions included state, district and block officials within UMED as well as the PMU, as well as members of community institutions such as CLFs and VOs. Samruddhi Sakhis were also actively involved, alongside gram panchayat officials. In total, 50 interviews and discussions were conducted using tailored guides and checklists relevant to each stakeholder group. Below is a summary of the coverage:

Data Collection Method	Respondents	Number of KIIs/FGDs Conducted
Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	SRLM Officials (State, District & Block levels)	16
	SPMU – State Team	3
	SPMU – District & Block Coordinators	6
	VO Office Bearers	5
	CRPs / Samruddhi Sakhis	16
	Community Institutions – FGD Guides	3
	Gram Panchayat Officials	3
	<i>Note: No dedicated M&E resource at PMU level</i>	

FGDs	Identification Team	5
	CLF Office Bearers	3

Table 11: Summary of KIs and FGDs Conducted with Key Stakeholders

SRLM

As part of the understanding system preparedness, a total of 16 Key Informant Interviews (KIs) were conducted with officials from UMED MSRLM across multiple levels, including state, district, and block offices. These interviews were designed to gather insights into policy intentions, field realities, coordination mechanisms, and capacity constraints within SRLM as well as comprehensive understanding of the program’s planning, implementation, and operational challenges.

Reach of UMED - MSRLM: Efforts, Impact, and Challenges

UMED – MSRLM, Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission has made considerable efforts to reach vulnerable populations, leveraging the SHG-VO-CLF structure and support from its dedicated cadre of CRPs. Yet, coverage remains uneven, particularly among Extremely Vulnerable Households in remote hamlets or those affected by seasonal migration. As an SRLM official explained, *“Many of our ultra-poor women live in scattered areas or migrate seasonally; this makes it extremely difficult to track them consistently.”* Traditional SHG formation, requiring even minimal savings of Rs. 10–50, is not feasible for many target households. Consequently, those with irregular or no income, or without access to SHGs or community support, continue to be excluded.

Another SRLM official echoed these challenges: *“Even though we have covered over 11 lakh households under UMED’s schemes, mobility and scattered populations remain a barrier to engaging with these communities.”* At the state level, officials acknowledge that while the vision of targeting ultra-poor households is clear, translating it into action at the block and VO level is difficult.

At the state level, officials recognise that while the vision of targeting ultra-poor households is understood in principle, translating this into actionable outcomes at the block and VO level is challenging. A state official observed, *“The vision is clear, but in remote or sparsely populated hamlets, this sometimes does not translate into action.”*

Several key factors limit the government’s reach, like

1. Migration and seasonal mobility disrupt continuity, making it difficult to maintain engagement.
2. Remote and scattered households often face low access to infrastructure, further complicating outreach.

3. Capacity gaps among CRPs, coupled with their irregular presence in the field, reduce the effectiveness of facilitation.
4. Weak orientation and awareness among VO members and frontline staff.
5. Procedural gaps, such as incomplete documentation and inconsistent VO meetings.

Adding to these challenges, officials note the lack of dedicated manpower within UMED, making it extremely difficult for staff to meet daily targets, attend meetings, and simultaneously ensure outreach to these households.

Past Projects: What Worked and Why

Over the past decade, programs such as MTSP (Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana), Integrated Farming Clusters (IFC), handloom promotion initiatives, the Lakapati Didi scheme, and the recent “Lakpati Gaon” concept have emerged as some of the most successful interventions under UMED MSRLM.

State-level officials identified three key reasons for their success:

1. **Practical Training and Demonstrations:** Farmers and artisans received hands-on guidance on seed treatment, pest management, quality production, and handloom techniques, leading to improved outputs.
2. **Value Chain and Market Integration:** Programs were connected to broader value chains, ensuring that increased production could reach markets. The “Lakpati Gaon” model combines two to three interventions per household to achieve a minimum income target.
3. **Women-Centric and Community-Based Approach:** Emphasis on women’s empowerment and local facilitation through CRPs, Sakhis, and producer groups strengthened participation, ownership, and sustainability.

An SRLM official observed, *“Programs like MTSP worked because women could see tangible results in their work and UMED had supported in developing strong market linkages to convert their effort into income.”*

Convergence: A Systemic Challenge

While UMED supports other departments through its cadre, providing manpower for data collection, surveys, and field facilitation, formal mechanisms for convergence are largely absent. As an SRLM official explained, *“We often help other departments in the field, but there’s no formal directive that ensures departments work together systematically.”*

The value of convergence is widely acknowledged. Enterprises that combine scheme support, such as land from MGNREGA or infrastructure through CIF with technical assistance have a higher chance of success. Yet, fragmented scheme implementation, lack of documentation for land or tribal rights, and limited market access continue to restrict outcomes. Another SRLM official

reflected, *“Some tribal households benefit from nutrition gardens or small livestock units, but for many others, seasonal migration or landlessness prevents them from accessing even the most basic support.”*

Non-farm livelihood interventions, particularly cluster-based enterprise models, show considerable potential. Still, the absence of structured convergence with government schemes and targeted technical support reduces their effectiveness.

The Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP), which channels demands from SHGs and VOAs into Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs), exemplifies a framework that could enable convergence. Yet, coordination remains limited. As an SRLM official observed, *“Even when programs are well-designed, the separate functioning of the PRI and SRLM departments makes seamless support almost impossible on the ground.”* The PRI Convergence Project, implemented in select districts such as Nashik and Nandurbar, utilises digital platforms to facilitate scheme linkage and demand submission, demonstrating the potential of structured collaboration. However, its effectiveness in field-level implementation is yet to be fully assessed.

Instances of good convergence practices do exist. In Nandurbar, the digital finance department provided laptops for Bank Convergence (BC) agents who are part of UMED’s financial inclusion vertical, facilitating smoother coordination. Nevertheless, officials emphasise that there are no formal nodal persons or channels for convergence, and periodic inter-departmental connections are sporadic at best. As one SRLM official summarised, *“Without consistent structures or dedicated personnel, convergence remains a series of small efforts rather than a system-wide approach.”*

MSY Implementation: Efforts, Challenges, and Timeframes

Across villages where the Mahasamruddhi Yojana (MSY) is implemented, understanding of the program’s purpose varies widely. State-level officials acknowledge that the vision of targeting the ultra-poor is clear in principle. Yet translating it into actionable strategies at district and block levels remains difficult. Many residents and frontline workers are still unsure of the program’s objectives. An SRLM official reflected, *“At the village level, many people are still unsure about the purpose of MSY. Without repeated orientation, both community leaders and frontline workers risk treating it like just another scheme.”*

Early training efforts under MSY often prioritised timelines and deliverables rather than fostering a deeper understanding of inclusion and social targeting. Many respondents noted that refresher trainings and regular dialogues could strengthen comprehension, especially if they incorporate gender and social inclusion perspectives, which are often overlooked.

Time is another critical factor. Several officials voiced doubts about achieving substantial impact within the program’s three-year timeframe. One SRLM official explained, *“For a poor family to come out of abject poverty, nurturing and handholding from its own organisations for at least 6–8 years is extremely critical. Here we are focusing on the Poorest of the Poor. I feel the graduation model of 3 years is too short as our goal is too ambitious.”*

SRLM officials emphasised institution and capacity building needs across levels. *“If VO leaders are trained properly on facilitation and social inclusion, the entire identification process improves,”* noted a block-level official. Key recommendations from respondents included systematic household-level verification, improved documentation, open dialogue during VO meetings, planned revisits, and active coordination with local service providers to reach hard-to-access households.

The strongest concern voiced by respondents was around documentation. Several SRLM officials admitted that records of excluded households are often incomplete or missing altogether. *“Documentation is the bridge between one milestone and the next,”* one official explained. *“If state-specific portals with live tracking were available, many details could be captured in real time, reducing confusion later”.* Others noted that documenting reasons for exclusion - whether absence, refusal, or community disagreement, creates an audit trail and ensures that such households can be revisited later. As one state-level respondent remarked, *“We must think of this as a living list, not a one-time exercise.”*

Finally, officials highlighted the need for stronger coordination across different actors in the system. At the state level, there was recognition that guidelines are often interpreted differently across districts, leading to uneven practices. At the block level, SRLM officials spoke of difficulties in aligning with other departments or ensuring the presence of key stakeholders in meetings. *“Sometimes the Anganwadi worker is busy with health drives, the ASHA is doing a survey, and then the endorsement meeting happens without them,”* a block coordinator explained. Respondents stressed that coordination cannot only happen in silos between the MSY team and SRLM teams; more joint consultations, exposure/field visits, write shops, or periodic group-level discussions are needed to ensure common understanding. Without such spaces, the program risks becoming a series of disconnected, task-to-task activities rather than a cohesive effort where everyone works as one team.

CBOs (CLFs and VOs and GPs)

To gain a grounded understanding of community-level functioning and perspectives, a series of KIIs and FGDs were conducted with key stakeholders within the local governance and community-based organisations. Five VO office bearers were interviewed to understand the internal management, decision-making processes, and facilitation challenges within Village Organisations. Sixteen CRPs and Samruddhi Sakhis were engaged to capture insights on frontline implementation, household engagement, and the practical challenges of supporting ultra-poor households. Additionally, three focus group discussions were conducted with CLFs guides to understand broader community dynamics, participation patterns, and social inclusion practices. To complement these perspectives, three Gram Panchayat officials were also interviewed to assess the interface between community organizations and local governance, including the role of GPs in supporting program implementation and facilitating convergence with government schemes. Collectively, these engagements provided a comprehensive view of capacities, gaps, and operational realities at the grassroots level.

Role of CLFs and VOs in Communities:

CLFs and VOs have served as foundational institutions within communities, influencing improvements in household financial outcomes such as income, savings, loans, and expenditures, as well as advancing women's empowerment. These institutions have played a key role in connecting households to livelihoods opportunities and basic entitlements, establishing themselves as critical pillars of community-level development.

Existing Capacity of CBOs

The capacity of CBOs such as VOs, CLFs, and Gram Panchayats remains limited in many areas. In several locations, VO meetings are irregular, weakening collective decision-making and monitoring. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the SRLM system, reducing the savings capacity of SHGs and limiting their ability to repay loans. Consequently, SHG credit has often been diverted toward consumption rather than enterprise, with members noting that *“if we start something new, we may not find a market to sell.”*

VOs continue to face technical and community cadre constraints. While some members were promoted to a 'community cadre' or CRPs and received training to scale and sustain operations, the reach of these trainings remains limited. Many community cadre positions in the VOs surveyed remain vacant, indicating that institutional building is still a work in progress.

Engagement and Institutional Building

As part of MSY, CLF and VO office bearers have tried to be as engaged as possible, including in the selection of Samruddhi Sakhis. However, the timing of PRA activities, during peak summer, monsoons, wedding seasons, or Gharkul work, dramatically reduced participation. CLF respondents emphasised that proper communication and advance notice of VO meetings are necessary to ensure office bearers can participate. They also highlighted the need for mandatory involvement of CLF and VO leaders in Samruddhi Sakhi trainings so that they understand the concepts themselves and can guide their groups effectively.

Capacity-Building Needs

Capacity-building remains a critical gap. Respondents underlined the importance of reskilling VO members and Sakhis in facilitation and soft skills, including active listening, conflict navigation, and empathetic engagement. A VO office bearer reflected, *“Our trainings are good, but they often miss the difficult conversations. Inclusion, social barriers, or even how to handle pushback, these things are covered only at the surface level, yet they decide whether the process works on the ground.”*

Stronger screening processes for Sakhis, coupled with systematic and context-specific training, are needed to ensure they can manage group dynamics, encourage participation from quieter members, and address disputes. However, inconsistent support from the UMED cadre remains a challenge. Irregular participation of I-CRPs, combined with delayed or irregular payments, has led

to disengagement and attrition, leaving gaps in facilitation support for Samruddhi Sakhis. One Sakhi highlighted, *“Many CRPs, me included, have not received our payments for months. How can we rely only on this work? We are forced to look for other sources of income to keep our households running.”*

A CLF office bearer described a similar struggle: *“I had to shift closer to the market cluster because there were no livelihood opportunities in my village. On top of that, the schools near my village were not good enough, and I wanted better education for my children. Now, I only go to the CLF office when there are meetings.”*

Convergence at the Community Level

At the village level, convergence often takes shape through the everyday functioning of VOs and CLFs. While there is no formal system mandating inter-department coordination, local leaders and cadres have found ways to link households with schemes and services using the SHG–VO–CLF platforms.

In Nandurbar and Nashik, for example, VOs have acted as a bridge between SHG households and Gram Panchayats under MGNREGA. Women mobilised through VOs demanded farm bunding, land levelling, and well construction, which were later integrated into Panchayat work plans, creating local employment and improving irrigation for small farmers. VO leaders have also partnered with Anganwadi workers to improve nutrition outcomes, ensuring tribal children received take-home rations.

Skill training and livelihood linkages also emerge through VO and CLF facilitation. In Nashik, CRPs in the past have identified young women interested in tailoring and retail courses, connecting them with training under DDU-GKY and securing placements in nearby towns. While not systemic, these linkages show the potential of grassroots institutions to anchor convergence when supported with adequate training and follow-up.

Limitations of Convergence

Despite these encouraging examples, convergence remains inconsistent and largely dependent on proactive local leaders or responsive cadres. A CLF office bearer reflected, *“When VOs and CLFs take ownership, schemes start to reach the right households. But without consistent support from officials, these efforts remain scattered.”* This highlights both the promise and the limitations of convergence at the community level: meaningful results are possible, but institutional backing is insufficient to make it sustainable and universal.

Gram Panchayats, meanwhile, have only a surface-level understanding of MSY. A GP office bearer noted, *“I see more sakhis in the village, and I understand that this program focuses on addressing poverty and supporting poor households.”* While GDPs formally recognise livelihood concerns, in practice, village-level SRLM structures and GPs rarely converge. This lack of coordination reduces the potential for aligning community-driven plans with available government resources, leaving opportunities for synergy untapped.

Consultations with the SPMU included KIs with a total of nine SPMU personnel, comprising three members from the state-level team and six coordinators operating at district and block levels. These interactions provided insights into the operational, strategic, and programmatic aspects of the ILP initiative. A notable observation is the absence of a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) resource at the SPMU level, which has implications for systematic tracking of program implementation, data validation, and timely feedback.

Recruitment and Selection Processes

The SPMU's recruitment and selection process for CRPs, coaches, and coordinators has been organised through collaborative efforts involving BRAC, SRLM, ADS, and SPMU teams. Recruitment guidelines were developed during write-shops, covering eligibility criteria, educational qualifications, prior work experience, and basic literacy and numeracy skills. The selection process generally began with application screening through VOs and CLFs, followed by written tests and interviews to assess candidates' motivation, understanding of PoP households, and facilitation skills. Selection committees typically included district and block officials, CLF representatives, and program-specific staff, with a minimum of one-woman member on each panel. In some cases, contextual deviations occurred, such as considering candidates recommended by the community even if they did not fully meet formal educational requirements.

Verification and Preparedness of Staff

Verification of candidate quality has been limited. While literacy and numeracy tests and interviews were conducted, no systematic mechanism exists to evaluate conceptual understanding of the program, facilitation skills, or prior experience with SHGs. Consequently, newly recruited staff, especially at the district and block levels, display inconsistent readiness. Representation of vulnerable groups has been partially achieved, with ST candidates included, though PVTG representation remains minimal. Plans to relax criteria and increase recruitment from marginalised groups are in place but have not yet been fully implemented.

Recruitment Challenges and Workforce Stability

Several factors have affected recruitment and workforce stability. Migration and seasonal mobility of eligible candidates, low educational attainment, and specific age or gender criteria limited the pool of applicants. Delays in interview scheduling and a high dropout rate further constrained recruitment. Additionally, irregular or delayed payments to CRPs and Sakhis have compelled many to seek alternative livelihoods, reducing continuity and engagement in program activities.

Role of SPMU and SRLM Functionaries

SPMU and SRLM functionaries play primarily a supportive role in the ILP program, with limited field-level engagement. While SRLM provides virtual guidance and oversight, district and block-level ownership remain weak. District-level review meetings are held monthly, and updates flow weekly

from DMMU and BMMU teams. SPMU ensures compliance with government protocols and administrative procedures, but hands-on engagement in program-specific activities is constrained.

Convergence with Other Departments

Convergence with other government departments is limited and largely informal. There are no formal joint policy directives or circulars to facilitate interdepartmental collaboration. Pilot initiatives, such as the FNHW cell's backyard kitchen gardens across 600 households, have shown potential, but most efforts remain small-scale and localised. Interdepartmental coordination is sporadic, with no designated nodal officer, and systemic bottlenecks persist due to middlemen, weak awareness, and resistance within middle management. Digital platforms, such as those used in the PRI Convergence Project and steering committees, are being tested for scheme linkage and demand submission, but their operational impact at the field level is yet to be fully realised.

Programmatic Focus and Documentation

The SPMU's programmatic priorities include gender and social inclusion, tribal and PVTG empowerment, climate resilience, livelihoods diversification, financial inclusion through SHGs, and social empowerment at the community level. Strategies are being developed, but formal mechanisms to track inclusion and monitor progress remain in early stages. Documentation is primarily maintained through Excel sheets and field visit reports, with case studies developed by consultants. SOPs and IEC materials are still in draft form, with Google Drive being used for record-keeping.

Capacity-Building for CBOs and Facilitators

Capacity-building efforts for VOs, CLFs, Sakhis, and CRPs remain irregular and inconsistent. Training programs focus on facilitation skills, active listening, conflict management, and empathetic engagement, but often fail to fully prepare staff for complex group dynamics, managing dissent, and promoting participation from marginalised voices. There is a recognised need for context-specific training to ensure facilitators can implement processes effectively while supporting meaningful social inclusion at the grassroots level.

Significant gaps remain in ensuring staff preparedness, consistency, and inclusion, as well as in developing a formal framework for monitoring and convergence across departments. Strengthening these areas is critical to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the ILP program.

Strengths Observed in Implementation:

The PRA and household identification process demonstrated several notable strengths across different levels of implementation:

a) **PMU / Planning Related**

1. **Dedication of Block and District Coordinators:** Block and district coordinators showed strong commitment, working continuously for over 30 days. Their ongoing presence helped maintain the PRA and identification process and provided guidance to field teams.
2. **Timely Support from State-Level PMU:** The state PMU, in collaboration with UMED, provided timely guidelines and official communications. This helped field teams carry out activities smoothly and with clear direction.
3. **Adaptive Leadership without Digital Systems:** Even without a Management Information System (MIS) or formal monitoring framework, leaders at various levels took initiative to oversee field activities. Their proactive supervision and problem-solving helped maintain progress and avoid disruptions.

b) **UMED Field Cadres & Samruddhi Sakhis**

1. **Commitment and Efforts of Samruddhi Sakhis:** Sakhis carried out the PRA process under challenging conditions such as extreme heat, monsoon onset, difficult terrain, and limited support from community leaders. In villages where UMED structures were not fully functional—for example, where VOs were inactive and I-CRPs were absent—Sakhis continued the exercises, ensuring progress on the ground.
2. **Ownership Among Field Cadres:** Many Sakhis, VO leaders, and I-CRPs took responsibility beyond their formal roles to ensure vulnerable households were included. This helped strengthen the credibility and inclusiveness of the PRA process

c) **Process & Community Facilitation**

1. **Facilitation in Challenging Community Contexts:** Field teams managed conflicts and disputes in communities professionally and neutrally, ensuring that local tensions did not affect the PRA outcomes.
2. **Effective Informal Coordination:** Teams created informal coordination systems involving Sakhis, I-CRPs, CCs, and block-level staff. These helped align schedules, share information, and resolve challenges quickly.

Sensitivity to Social Barriers: Teams were careful to navigate complex caste, gender, and social dynamics, conducting the PRA in ways that promoted inclusion and reflected the realities of marginalised households.

Recommendations:

Area	Short term recommendations	Long term recommendations
Institution Building of CBOs	Train Sakhis and CRPs on rights frameworks (Right to Work, Right to Food, Social Security, FRA), build skills in facilitation, counselling, active listening, and empathetic engagement. Conduct periodic refresher training for better recall. Orient VO and CLF office bearers before meetings. Adapt trainings to the local context. Draft SOPs defining responsibilities of VOs, CLFs, GPs, Sakhis, and CRPs, along with reporting mechanisms and feedback loops.	Institutionalise peer-learning networks and reflection sessions with MSY Cadre, VOs and CLFs to handle complex social issues, inclusion challenges, and group dynamics. Integrate SOPs into regular program cycles and periodically update based on lessons learned and emerging challenges.
Convergence and Holistic Planning	Prepare an entitlements booklet detailing relevant schemes and the procedures to access them and share it with Sakhis. Initiate coordination with line departments at village, CLF, and VO levels.	Establish formal partnerships with multiple line departments and develop MSY-specific action plans. Integrate household plans into GPDP.
Monitoring, Feedback, and Accountability	Establish reporting chains from MSY Sakhis to VO, CLF, and Block/PMU levels, with daily or weekly reviews to monitor progress. Formalise escalation protocols for household or community-level issues.	Institutionalise grievance redressal mechanisms at the block level. Maintain mandatory documentation and a digital archive of all monitoring and program records for transparency and institutional memory. Use monitoring data to inform program iteration.
Social Inclusion and	The high number of excluded households needs immediate attention. Appeal mechanisms should be set up at the CLF	Develop community support systems within VOs and CLFs.

Community Engagement	level so that the households can be considered. Further, clear exclusion criteria needs to be established at the State level, so that the identification teams can be trained on these	Set up grievance redressal mechanisms at the CLF level.
	Validate PRA findings in open community meetings and display outputs on VO and GP notice boards.	Institutionalise inclusive facilitation methods to amplify marginalised voices.
		Embed social issue mitigation into long-term village and GP planning (VPRP, GPDP).

Table 12: Recommendations on system preparedness

Limitation and Challenges

During Phase I, the CRISP team faced several challenges that hindered the timely and complete implementation of planned activities. Delays in communication from the PMU regarding the official start, combined with overlapping field-level work, immediately restricted the team's ability to complete the targeted number of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) processes. Further compounding these issues were unfavourable weather conditions, ranging from extreme peak summer heat to the onset of monsoons, which restricted mobility and disrupted activities. Logistical and coordination gaps, notably limited support from local cadres and institutions in certain areas, also added to mobilisation delays, ultimately causing the household inclusion-exclusion surveys to fall short of their target coverage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, strengthening the institutional capacity of community-based organisations requires a phased approach that begins with targeted skill-building and clarity of roles, supported by locally adapted training and clear SOPs. Over time, these foundational steps should transition into institutionalised peer-learning systems and regularly updated operational protocols that enable VOs, CLFs, and MSY cadres to effectively address complex social and inclusion challenges.

Advancing convergence and holistic planning similarly calls for immediate measures such as developing entitlements booklets for Sakhis and initiating coordination with relevant line departments. In the longer term, these actions must evolve into formalised departmental partnerships and integration of household-level plans into broader GPDP planning frameworks to ensure sustained and structured convergence.

Strengthening monitoring, feedback, and accountability mechanisms begins with establishing clear reporting chains, regular progress reviews, and escalation protocols at the PMU level. As these systems mature, they should be supported by institutionalised grievance redressal mechanisms and mandatory digital documentation practices that preserve institutional memory and enable data-driven programme iteration.

Finally, enhancing social inclusion and community engagement requires addressing the excluded households on priority as discussed in the Exclusion surveys section. Grievance redressal mechanisms need to be established at the CLF level, along with developing clear exclusion criteria at the PMU level. Further, transparency should be adopted to discuss PRA findings through open community processes and public disclosure. In the longer term, community support systems within VOs and CLFs, inclusive facilitation practices, and the integration of social issue mitigation into formal village and GP planning processes will be essential to embedding inclusion within local governance and programme structures.

The proposed strategy outlines a comprehensive pathway for strengthening program efficacy, transitioning from initial household identification to long-term institutional sustainability.



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