

Final Programme Report: Making Women's Voices and Votes Count (2013-15), a project undertaken by IT for Change, KMVS and ANANDI

Making Women's Voices and Votes Count (2013-2015) is a joint initiative of IT for Change, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan and ANANDI, which has focused on leveraging the potential of digital technologies for building a vibrant women's political constituency at the grassroots and a gender-responsive local governance system, across three sites, in the states of Gujarat and Karnataka in India. IT for Change has provided conceptual leadership to the project, and its field centre Prakriye has spearheaded the implementation at the Mysore site. Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan and ANANDI have steered the implementation at Kutch and Bhavnagar, respectively.

1. Stories of change from the three sites

Making Women's Voices and Votes Count (January 2013-June 2015) has aimed at leveraging the digital opportunity – through the strategic use of community radio, community video, ICT-enabled information centres, IVRS-based translocal networking and GIS-enabled participatory mapping – for building a vibrant women's political constituency at the grass-roots, across three sites in India – Kutch and Bhavnagar districts of Gujarat, and Mysore district in Karnataka. The work on the ground has been led by *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan*, ANANDI, and IT for Change, respectively.

In specific, the project has worked towards the following three outcomes:

1. Increased networking among EWRs and active participation of EWRs and women's groups in gender responsive governance.
2. Increased realisation of claims and entitlements by women in Gujarat and Karnataka.
3. Advocacy and campaigns at a local and institutional level enable a shift in local public discourse towards gender equality.

In this final programme report, we bring to you 3 stories (one from each site), highlighting the progress towards each of the outcomes of the project.

Story from ANANDI: How the IVR platform set up under the project has enhanced women's participation in local governance, contributing to the realisation of Outcome 1.

At the ANANDI site in Bhavnagar district, the infomediaries of the 5 information centres set up under the project (all of whom are former elected women representatives/women community leaders associated with the *Mahila Swaraj Manch*), were trained in utilising IVR technology to record and send voice messages in bulk, using the Open Source IVR platform developed under the project. Though developing a grasp of the technicalities of the IVR was an uphill journey for the infomediary team, they persisted. This is because they recognised the tremendous political gains from investing in this techno-social opportunity that could potentially alter the prevailing discourse on women leaders in local government, and women's role within *Panchayat* forums, by communicating alternative ideas about women in local government. In fact, these messages on women's right to be a part of the *Panchayat*, and their capacity to demonstrate leadership, and the affirmation of women who have come out of *purdah*, have contributed immensely to confidence-building among first-timer EWRs in the local areas. But the most significant contribution of the IVR networking strategy has been ensuring the effective participation of women in *Gram Sabhas*, as detailed below.

In many villages of Sihor and Umralla block (such as Padapan, Katodiya, Krashnpara and Tana), the *Panchayat* level officials and in some cases, the *Sarpanch*, were indefinitely postponing *Gram Sabhas* or trying to hold *Gram Sabhas* without following the due process of public announcement/notice. The infomediary team strongly felt that the *Gram Sabha* could not be reduced to a farce. Hence, they obtained the *Gram Sabha* schedule from the block level, and started broadcasting IVR announcements, structured in the following format: “*Namaste/Greetings from Mahila Swaraj manch. ..Today, on (date), Bhakal ,Bhudna rabarika , Matda Katodiya and Piparla villages have a gram sabha. Village residents are requested to definitely be present at the gram sabha, speak about pending questions of the village and pass resolutions on the same. Keep listening*”. Upon receiving these messages, women in the community and members of marginalised groups (especially those individuals who never used to attend *Gram Sabhas* previously) were motivated to attend the *Gram Sabha* in their village, and there were even a few rights-based discussions.

Further, in some villages, elected women representatives succeeded in forcing the officials of the local *Panchayat* to follow due process in convening the *Gram Sabha*, as the following story from Padapan village illustrates. In late 2013, when the infomediary team got hold of the *Gram Sabha* schedule, they sent the information on IVRS to elected members of Padapan village and other women in the community. The team followed up the message with a visit to the *Sarpanch*, *Ilaben*, and *Panchayat* members, on the scheduled day of the *Gram Sabha*. They found that *Ilaben* and other elected members were unaware about it. It turned out that the *Panchayat* level official in charge of organising *Gram Sabhas*, had not informed the *Sarpanch*. At once, the *Sarpanch* (*Ilaben*) called the official, to ask him why he hadn't informed her in advance, when he had access to this information 8 days prior. She found out that the official was avoiding

holding the *Gram Sabha* in *Ilaben's* village as he had additional charge of another *Gram Panchayat* – and was trying to minimise work-load. *Ilaben* insisted that he come to the village. As a result of this dialogue, he arrived, and the *Gram Sabha* happened, as scheduled.

This story illustrates how the IVR-enabled EWR networking platform set up under the project has played a key role in increasing women's participation in formal local governance forums – a necessary step for pushing gender agendas in decision-making process; contributing to the work towards Outcome 1.

Story from KMVS: How the info-centres strategy has gained institutional acceptance, paving the way for a long-term support structure for marginalised women's claims-making (envisaged in Outcome 2)

At the start of the programme, KMVS had only 2 block information centres – in Mundra and in Nakhatrana. The initial idea was to expand the information centres strategy by taking it to the village-cluster level, as the KMVS team strongly felt that the centres could function as a key space to sensitize the *Panchayats*, and take gender-responsive local governance agendas to key stakeholders, through dialogue. What has been most encouraging is that after being exposed to the work of the cluster level information centres set up by KMVS, especially the web-based information portal *Panjo Haq*, 7 *Panchayats* in these two blocks came forward to dialogue with KMVS on how they could replicate the info-centre model in their village. In fact, these *Panchayats* with inputs from KMVS, have started the centres, and even allocated financial resources from their budgets, to meet their operational costs. Similarly, in Mundra, the block-level *Panchayat* has allocated a space within its premises for the block level information centre to continue its operations beyond the *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count*.

These are clearly signs that the information centres strategy is becoming institutionalised, and there are strong indications of its sustainability, beyond the project period. It is important to recognise that there are gains from the information centres beyond the pathways to entitlements for marginalised women that they open up. For instance, they provide spaces where new women leaders can emerge. In fact, for

infomediaries such as Memuna of the Vithon information centre and Sitaben of the Ugedi centre, the information centres have been spaces to build their political acumen. In fact, both of them are now gearing up to contest in the upcoming *Panchayat* elections. Similarly, info-centres also open up women's journeys into the public sphere – by sending out an unmistakable message that “*the doors of the Panchayat (and government offices) are open to all, not just men*”. In fact, in many of the villages where *Panchayat* information centres have been set up, the KMVS team has observed that women from the community, because of the inputs they receive from the infomediaries, have started visiting block level offices. As Hansaben from Vithon village shared, “*Even though I have studied till Class X, I never knew how to fill the application form for a ration card. When I needed mine, I asked Memuna to come with me, but she just called the block office. (And then I went) and my ration card was done!! Now, I help other women to fill these forms. I feel so happy and proud!!*”

This story illustrates how the institutionalization of the info-centres strategy at the Panchayat level, has enabled the creation of a support structure for marginalised women's claims-making envisaged in Outcome 2, which can be sustained beyond the life of the project .

Story from IT for Change : Sowing the seeds of an alternative discourse on gender and governance (Progress towards Outcome 3)

On 30 June 2015, after the results of the *Gram Panchayat* elections of April-May 2015 were announced, the IT for Change team organised an EWR experience-sharing forum at the district level, inviting the key women leaders (EWRs and others from the community) who had been active in the project, and the new batch of EWRs. This was envisaged as a step towards building a sense of community among women in local politics. The meeting was attended by 102 women, including outgoing and incoming elected women representatives across these 7 *Panchayats*, women community leaders who had contested and lost elections, and members of women's collectives who had participated actively in the project, and infomediaries. At the event, small group discussions were facilitated among the participants on the following key issues:

1. What problems have you faced in your village, because of being a woman? What kinds of problems have other women like you faced?
2. For these problems, as a woman who is elected to power, what do you think you can do in the next 5 years? In 5 years, what is your dream for the women of your village?
3. What support you want from women's collectives, NGOs and government officials (and other stakeholders)?
4. How do you see the potential of ICTs in strengthening your work as a EWR?

Participants stressed the need to build alliances with male *Panchayat* members and women in the community, to tackle the key issues and concerns that women and girls faced in their villages. Domestic violence, child marriage, and high drop-out rates among adolescent girls were identified as key problems. Finally, the women leaders who had been active in the project shared the advantages of utilising community media learning resources, GIS-enabled participatory mapping and IVR messaging systems in their work. For us, the most affirming aspect of the event was that outgoing women leaders saw meaning in attending the meeting and sharing their thoughts with incoming elected women representatives. The meeting was meant only for women, and men were firmly told by a few attendees to stay out. Leaders from women's community based organisations were also invited. The intent of the meeting was to reinforce the need for EWRs and women community leaders to invest in a value-based model of feminist leadership, supporting one another at every opportunity. Outgoing women leaders who had been part of our community media based pedagogies met as a larger group, across *Panchayats*, for the first time. They listened to women who had just assumed office. They spoke about their own successes and failures. And

most importantly, they seemed to understand what a women's space meant for the journey of empowerment. In an ice-breaker game that we had designed, women set aside caste norms to interact with other women in close physical proximity. As one woman community leader shared, *"Even though I lost the Panchayat elections in my village, I came to the meeting as I felt we have a responsibility to work together"*. Similarly, an ex-EWR who attended the meeting, said: *"After being part of all these discussions, I feel that in my term, I did not do enough... and there was too much corruption and not enough work. But please don't waste your opportunity, those of you who have come to power.. There are so many shared issues (that we women) can fight for"*.

This event was a watershed moment for IT for Change, in terms of the work towards Outcome 3, as the seeds of a new discourse on gender and governance, have certainly been sown in the project area!

2. Stories of organizational change

For the three partnering organisations, the project has furthered their work towards their respective long-term visions of change, in the following manner:

(a) Building intra-organisational synergies: *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan*, since 1989, has focused on a diversified strategy of building multiple women's collectives, that work on economic, social and political empowerment. Thus, in the blocks of Mundra and Nakhatrana, it has set up the *Ujjas* and *Saiyere Jo Sangathan* that largely focus on savings and livelihoods concerns, and the *Gram Shashini Manch* (or the EWR collective), whose main vision is that of strengthening women's leadership capacities and enabling their effective public-political engagement. Until the start of *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count*, the savings and livelihood collectives and the EWR collective did not closely work together in a concerted manner, and focused largely on their individual mandates. But as women's constituency building was a key vision of this project, a lot of effort has been invested in the past 2.5 years to ensure the participation of village level women's collectives in local governance forums; and obtaining commitments from village level leaders of the *Sangathans* to mobilise the members of their local women's groups for *Gram Sabha* and *Mahila Gram Sabha*. Another key development has been the formalisation of the representation of the *Sangathan* leadership on the board of the *Mahila Swaraj Manch*. This has strengthened the synergies between the multi-dimensional strategies for change, adopted by KMVS.

(b) Strengthening internal capacities: At all three sites, the project has enabled a strengthening of the team capacities at different levels, as detailed below.

At KMVS, this project built the team's skills to design and develop new tools for strengthening ongoing efforts for gender-responsive local governance – such as training modules at the cusp of gender, local governance and technology for elected women representatives, male *Panchayat* members and infomediaries; and introducing gender score cards into *Panchayats* to push them to address women's needs and priorities effectively.

At ANANDI, the project has enabled the *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team to acquire an appreciation of various ICT possibilities for enhancing local action – such as community radio, community video and IVRS – through exposure visits to IT for Change and KMVS. From an initial position of fear and lack of confidence in handling ICTs, the *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team members have come a long way, especially after their exposure visit to the KMVS community radio station – where they saw others *"just like themselves"* handling such technologies with ease and comfort. The *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team has also started integrating these learnings in their work – and one of the biggest shifts that the ANANDI team has observed, is the tremendous increase in the level of confidence of the *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team members, in dealing with

video shooting, handling voice recording, editing voice messages and sending out IVRS blasts themselves. In fact, in the Annual General Body meet of the *Mahila Swaraj Manch* in June 2015, the team made a digital presentation of the organisation's work over the past 15 years.

At IT for Change, this project helped the team make their presence felt in a space in which they were previously outsiders – *Gram Panchayats*. Prior to the project, the IT for Change team had been largely focusing on utilising ICT-enabled strategies for citizenship education and opening up women's access to public information and entitlements. It was *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count* that pushed the team to focus on strengthening linkages between women's collectives and elected women, and build their skills in effectively navigating the dynamics of working in a politically volatile environment. Also, this project opened up a whole new repertoire of techno-social possibilities that the team was not using previously – GIS-enabled participatory mapping, Open Source IVR, and an 'easy-to-use' MIS for entitlements tracking and a wiki-based public information portal; and learn enough to train the partner organisations in appropriating these technologies.

3. Programme context

Context

The hyper-politicisation of *Gram Panchayat* functioning, and the stranglehold of caste and communal structures on women's mobility and agency, have been key contextual factors that all 3 project teams have had to struggle with, and fight against, on an everyday basis.

In Kutch district, the project team and the leadership of the *Gram Shashini Manch* have had to invest a lot of energies in helping first-time elected members walk the tightrope of being affiliated to political parties without compromising the values of their feminist politics, at a fundamental level. *Panchayat* members find it impossible to obtain grants, without being on the right side of the ruling party at the block level. More worryingly, there have been a number of instances where the *Manch* has faced the challenge of helping articulate women leaders fight opposition from informal (caste and community) leaders in their villages – especially when it takes the form of character-assassination.

Similarly, at the ANANDI site, the *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team has noticed that in the current batch of elected women (who came to power in 2012), many are willingly giving away their power to their husband. This has been disappointing for the senior leadership of the *Manch*, including the infomediaries – as they recall earlier generations of leaders struggling for the very rights that many among this new batch of women, are willingly giving up. This shift in the attitudes and perceptions of the women leaders who are coming into *Panchayats*, has indeed been a difficult situation for the ANANDI and *Mahila Swaraj Manch* team members to navigate. Also, in this round of elections, out of the total number of women *Sarpanches* who have come into power at the ANANDI site, the majority are from dominant caste groups (22 out of 26), that tend to place more stringent control on women's mobility and expression than *dalit* groups. This brings its own set of challenges – not just in terms of enhancing women's voices but also in terms of ensuring entitlement access to marginalised groups, in an electorate divided along caste and communal lines.

At the IT for Change site, the power politics between *Panchayat* Presidents and the *Panchayat* Development Officers has been a key challenge that the team has had to grapple with, in terms of rapport-building and gaining a foothold into the *Panchayats*. Additionally, the current brand of populist politics riding on caste and communal fractures that is prevalent in Mysore, accompanied by the relatively higher degree of devolution of funds and finances from the state government of Karnataka, has resulted in a situation where men broker informal deals among their networks. Women leaders are completely excluded from these networks of favours and also somewhat alienated from their constituencies, not being privy to

insider dealings.

In all three sites, we have seen the extensive use of mobiles by the political class for networking. Some women in the project have also been able to capitalise on the diffusion of phones and there are many stories of quick mobilisation and action. But the lack of broadband connectivity at the sub district level and the negligible ownership of smart phones among women did mean that the project had to tone down its ambition and work around the technological barriers to explore what was plausible.

Our experiences show that public participation of women, is not an easy challenge and gender plays a key role in shaping women's constraints and opportunities, even while it allows women a public presence. Caste and organized corruption make transparent dialogues difficult. The overall climate is one where traditional collectives are facing a setback and therefore mobilisation and gender based organising require consistent and relentless effort. These have to accompany the programme strategies. Further, the wider community media scenario is facing a setback with a lack of commitment on the part of the state.

Mitigation

Gender, governance and technology trainings; info-fairs; local campaigns; and community media strategies at all 3 sites have tried to address these contextual realities. Use of offline methods – MIS in the centres, IVRS messaging not dependent on smart phones, data-based evidence gathering for public screening, use of tablets to distribute content etc were helpful in addressing the lack of robust connectivity. Online aspects were introduced wherever possible – through info portals and wikis.

4. Results of the Programme

Outcome 1: Increased networking among EWRs and active participation of EWRs and women's groups in gender-responsive local governance

As per the project's theory of change, work towards this Outcome consisted of working towards two Outputs:

- 1.1 Increased participation by EWRs and women's collectives/leaders in local governance processes, especially on women's rights issues.
- 1.2 Creating a platform of EWRs to facilitate knowledge sharing and peer learning.

Reflections on progress towards Output 1.1

Towards Output 1.1, the main strategy adopted was to invest in building the leadership capacities of the core group of 122 elected women representatives to help them bring in gender perspectives into local governance processes; and to push for *Mahila Gram Sabhas*, to help elected women connect with their wider constituencies. Towards this, at all 3 sites – Kutch, Bhavnagar and Mysore districts – community media-based gender and governance trainings at the block and/district level, were effectively designed and implemented by the partnering organisations. For example, at the Kutch site, an episode of the community radio programme “*Khaso Shashan*”, featuring a fictional account of an EWR grappling with a case of dowry death in her village, was screened during the training, to generate a discussion on systemic gender discrimination. Similarly, in Bhavnagar district, community media workshops were organised with infomediaries and then elected women (adopting a cascading approach), to introduce them to the concept of how media and communication are important to debates on participatory governance, democracy, and the politics of representation. And at the IT for Change site, digital photography trainings utilising the

Panchayat camera were organised for the EWRs in the project area, to drive home the idea that they had equal rights to use *Panchayat* assets. In addition, at Mysore, a series of trainings on utilising Tablet PCs with preloaded resources on gender and governance, were conducted, to help elected women initiate and hold dialogues with their male counterparts, on key issues such as women's capacities for leadership and the need for peer support.

The second key strategy adopted to enhance the political participation of EWRs, women's collectives and women community leaders was that of convening *Mahila Gram Sabhas* (women-only village assemblies). The endline survey with 135 EWRs reveals that *Mahila Gram Sabhas* have been an extremely effective strategy- as over 47% of interviewees considered these forums to be critical spaces to push agendas into *Panchayat* decision-making processes. The success of these strategies in realising Output 1.1 is evident from the following fact - 102 out of the 122 core group EWRs (and 40 other EWRs) and over 1700 women community leaders have been participating in *Gram Sabhas* across the 3 sites, and raising key issues/concerns before their elected representatives.

Reflections on progress towards Output 1.2

The project has set up IVR platforms at each of the 3 sites, connecting elected women with their peers and/or their women's constituencies. At the KMVS site, in partnership with the private IVR service provider *Awaaz De*, an IVR network of 580 elected women in the project area has been set up. Through this network, messages on legislative and policy level changes in local governance, gender sensitisation and information about women's entitlements were sent on a weekly basis to the EWRs. The timing for the message broadcast was fixed as 4-6 pm on Mondays, based on a survey to assess women's preferences. Over the project period, the KMVS team focused on decentralising the process of content production by involving infomediaries in content production and they also explored the possibilities of opening up two-way dialogues through the IVR - by creating a IVR helpline where EWRs could call in and record their queries/doubts which would then be answered by subject experts from the KMVS team.

At the ANANDI and IT for Change sites, an Open Source IVR developed by IT for Change has been utilised to set up a mobile-networking platforms. In both these sites, the IVR platform has consisted of a network of EWRs and women community leaders.

In the case of ANANDI, the IVR platform is being completely managed by infomediaries (who invested a lot of time and effort in the initial year of the project in developing their comfort and skills, in using the technological platform). The infomediaries sent regular updates to the members on the IVR network, on rights and entitlements, announcements about government schemes, and most importantly, dates of *Gram Sabhas* and key *Panchayat* events - thereby breaking the stranglehold of the local power elite in doctoring these forums (as illustrated by the story of change from the ANANDI site, highlighted in Question 1).

At the IT for Change site, the IVR platform includes elected women, women community members and even men from the *Panchayats*. The messages that have been sent, pertain to information about government schemes in the area of agriculture and animal husbandry, health and sanitation-related awareness generation, announcements about key *Panchayat* forums, voter awareness campaign messaging prior to the *Panchayat* elections of April-May 2015, and the importance of participating in *Gram Sabhas*. Since the IVR strategy was developed while the team was still establishing rapport with the *Gram Panchayats* in the operational area, and as there was no preexisting EWR federation, the IT for Change team members feel that the project time period has not been adequate to refine the IVR messaging strategy; especially in terms of explicitly highlighting the gendered dynamics of formal *Panchayat* forums, and openly questioning prevailing gender norms.

Some thoughts:

On the whole, the Output-Outcome logic has been borne out in the case of Outcome 1 – as the enhanced participation of elected women and women's collectives in local governance processes; and trans-local networking through the IVR platform has indeed resulted in making governance gender-responsive. As data from the endline survey indicates, there is an expansion of the scope of areas in relation to which EWRs are able to influence formal decision-making processes of the *Panchayat*, and a broadening of the span of this engagement for individual EWRs. The EWRs who are a part of the project have managed to push a range of diverse agendas into the *Panchayat*: health, education, livelihoods, VAW, village infrastructure, drinking water, sanitation, etc. But are all of these agendas women's agendas? It may be useful to evaluate this point keeping in mind feminist scholar Srilatha Batliwala's observation in her book '*Engaging with Empowerment*' – The issues that are usually termed community issues are in fact women's issues as they affect women's lives on an everyday basis and women are often forced to look for solutions to them, to help their families cope. And what are typically considered as women's issues are in fact community issues – as the responsibilities to find solutions for them should in fact, rest with the entire community.

In the final analysis, it seems that the project has indeed been able to make this two-way movement between framing women's issues as community issues, and community issues as women's issues.

Outcome 2: Increased realisation of claims and entitlements by women in Gujarat and Karnataka

The Outcome-Output-Activities chain envisaged for realising Outcome 2 was that of setting up a network of women-run, ICT-enabled information centres, at the block and cluster level, across the 3 sites, equipped with appropriate informational databases, and ICT-enabled outreach strategies (Output 2.1).

At the start of the project, 6 block level information centres and 11 cluster level information centres were planned to be set up across the 3 sites – and this target has been met. At the KMVS site, in addition to the 2 block level centres and 4 cluster level centres set up under the project – each of which has been equipped with a web-based information portal '*Panjo Haq*' and MIS for entitlements-tracking – 7 new centres have started functioning in the operational area. These new centres were initiated by *Gram Panchayats* who were extremely keen to replicate the KMVS model, even if it meant allocating funds for the functioning of these centres, out of their limited budget. At the IT for Change site, 2 *Panchayats* came forward to set up info-centres in their areas, motivated by the work of the 4 cluster level centres established by the project team. At the ANANDI site as well, *Panchayats* have come forward demanding the establishment of the infocentre – but except in the case of the Tana centre, the project team has not accepted these requests as they are not satisfied about the capacities of these *Panchayats* to take forward the idea, fully owning it – and they do not want the infocentres to end up as back-offices of *Panchayats*, performing their outsourced work.

This buy-in for the infocentre strategy, across sites, is clearly proof of the impact of the innovations in public information outreach and entitlements-tracking that have been tried out, including

- web-based information portals (developed at the KMVS and IT for Change sites)
- innovative informational outreach methods such as IVR messaging, short films, monthly outreach visits, info-melas, and tools/games such as the *Mera Haq Mera Pehchan* (My rights, my identity) exercise developed by the ANANDI team
- digitalised databases of key demographic data of local communities for evidence-based claims-making (created at the IT for Change site).

Some thoughts:

Any reflection on the impact of the information-centre strategy would be incomplete without highlighting the key role that this strategy has played, in opening up pathways to empowerment for the women infomediaries and the *Mahiti Sakhis* (women volunteers who assist with the infocentres at the ANANDi site).

Before we conclude this section, a word of caution – the success of the infocentre strategy should not be interpreted as a story of smooth-sailing. There were numerous challenges and barriers that had to be negotiated – ranging from patriarchal controls at the household level that infomediaries (especially the young women infomediaries) had to break away from; and threats from the local power-elite; and in some instances, power struggles among the women in the Managing Committee.

Outcome 3: Advocacy and campaigns at local level enable a shift in gender equality

Realising this Outcome has mainly involved work towards the following Outputs:

Output 3.1 Producing and circulating gender-sensitive media products in the local public sphere, and
Output 3.2 Campaigns and Advocacy at the local level for gender-mainstreaming in local governance

As assessing discursive shifts is about measuring deep change in the collective consciousness of the participating communities, we think that it may be more appropriate to focus on measuring progress towards Outputs.

Reflections on Output 3.1

In terms of Output 3.1, weekly community radio programmes were broadcast at the KMVS and IT for Change site¹; and community video strategies were adopted at all 3 sites. A total of 21 videos were produced on a variety of gender and governance issues – and a detailed list of the films has been provided in Q11. These videos have pertained to topics such as:

- inspirational stories of strong and vibrant women leaders from among the EWRs in the operational area of the project,
- the importance of strengthening linkages between EWRs and women's collectives,
- *Mahila gram sabhas*, *info-melas* and social audits organised by the project,
- current local issues such as findings of a social audit on the functioning of fair price shops, and the social impacts of a proposed transmission line cutting across village grazing lands, and so on.

At all 3 sites, the project teams invested a lot of time and effort in film-screenings, and the following finding from the endline survey demonstrates the efficacy of this strategy in perspective-building. The survey revealed that over 81% of the EWRs interviewed for the endline were able to recall being a part of video-based learning processes. Further, the survey revealed that a greater proportion of EWRs who recall video-based learning processes reported critical perspectives on women's involvement in local electoral politics, when compared to EWRs who have not intensively engaged in such processes.

¹Upto September 2014, when the Gyanvani channel was taken off air by AIR.

Reflections on Output 3.2

At the KMVS site, four social audits and one info-*mela* have been completed. The social audits were linked to a block-level campaign on ensuring the accountability of the PDS system, across 42 villages of Mundra block. Other campaigns conducted, included: campaign to promote awareness on VAW, and challenging the acquisition of community-owned grasslands for power-line projects. As detailed in the previous narrative report, a Gender Score Card process has been introduced in 20 *Panchayats* to motivate them to take action on the following issues – women's health, women's access to livelihoods, violence against women, and girls' education.

At the ANANDI site, campaigns on single women and their entitlements, and women's land ownership have been completed; and an info-*mela* was organised in Sihor block in November 2014. More than 500 rural women (including former and current elected women representatives and women community leaders) participated in the event, and shared their experiences under the *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count* project, on using ICTs for strengthening women's rights-struggles within the local governance system. The event was attended by all 3 project teams, and other guests at the event included: Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women; Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women; and Ms. Bhartiben Shiyal, Member of Parliament, Bhavnagar constituency.

At IT for Change, one campaign on cervical cancer prevention has been undertaken. 4 info-*melas* and a concluding event bringing together current and former elected women representatives, to open up a dialogue on women's leadership (detailed in Question 1) have been organised. Another key advocacy initiative taken up by the IT for Change team was GIS-enabled participatory mapping. In Thumbasoge *Panchayat*, a GIS-enabled social audit of allocation of household-level subsidies benefits under *Nirmal Bharat* sanitation programme forced the *Panchayat* to open up a citizen dialogue on this issue and take remedial action to correct irregularities in allocation; and in Doddahejjur *Gram Panchayat*, a GIS-enabled audit of school infrastructure under the Right to Education Act was carried out to open up community discussions around this.

5. Lessons Learnt

Strategies	Did you achieve the result you had hoped? Was this successful?	Any lessons/learnings w.r.t taking this forward?
1. Capacity-building of elected women representatives through training modules on gender, governance and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trainings focused more on perspective-building dimensions than on the minutiae of local governance. Considering the low levels of connectivity and high levels of textual non-literacy, community media seemed the most appropriate ICT tool.- As the endline survey revealed that 27.78% of the 135 interviewees participated in standing committees and 33.33% in <i>Panchayat</i> finance-related discussions, compared to the negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- This experience reveals that trainings that aim at equipping EWRs to deal with the power dynamics within <i>Panchayats</i>, may be more important than lecturing them on rules and legislatures – as tacit knowledge about <i>Panchayat</i> procedures is better obtained through the direct process of political engagement, rather than from resource-persons.

Strategies	Did you achieve the result you had hoped? Was this successful?	Any lessons/learnings w.r.t taking this forward?
	<p>engagement in these areas in the baseline. We feel that the capacity-building approach adopted in this project has been fairly effective.</p>	<p>There is a need for peer learning spaces – an important contribution that this project made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The capability to perform politically, needs continuing learning and project mode activity may not be adequate. Further, political spaces are dynamic and elections bring new contenders. This means that strategies require to be institutionalised. In an area like gender training, such institutionalisation should not degenerate into prescriptive, classroom modules, but account for historical, cultural contexts and undertaken by committed and competent facilitators who respect peer-based learning methods.
<p>2. Mahila Gram Sabhas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Across the three sites, as it was felt that <i>Gram Sabhas</i> offered very limited space to push for women's agendas, women-only village assemblies/<i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> emerged as a key strategy. Certainly, mobilising women for the <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> was an uphill task. At the KMVS and ANANDI sites, the infomediary team and women community leaders of the EWR Federation played a major role. At the IT for Change site, the team invested energies in organising precursor meetings to the <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> (entitled “Networking meetings”) to help build trust between elected women and the women members of their constituencies, and to generate awareness about the grammar of participation, methods that would not reduce dialogue to polemics. - The Government of India's letter to the states in 2010 (the year of the <i>Gram Sabha</i>) and the letters issued by the <i>State Panchayat Raj</i> Departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> mandatory is crucial for translating the promise of political reservation of women into women's <i>de-facto</i> right to participate. ANANDI has met the Assistant Development Commissioner, Department of Rural Development, Gujarat, to advocate for mandatory <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> (between Jan-June 2015). And, working towards mandatory <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> will be a key advocacy priority for KMVS in the coming months. In Karnataka, legal provisions for this already exist.

Strategies	Did you achieve the result you had hoped? Was this successful?	Any lessons/learnings w.r.t taking this forward?
	<p>recommending the organising of <i>Mahila Sabhas</i> (in Gujarat in late 2013) and the circular issued by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, proved a suitable opening for negotiating for <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> with individual <i>Panchayats</i>.</p> <p>- <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> have been extremely successful in bringing women's agendas into the <i>Panchayat</i>. They have demonstrated that "women's issues are community issues; and that community issues are women's issues".</p>	
<p>3. Establishment of an IVR platform for trans-local networking of EWRs with their peers, and/or women community leaders</p>	<p>At the start of the project, the IVR network had been imagined as a space for communicating messages on gender and local governance, primarily to EWRs, in an uni-directional manner. But this idea became more refined over time:</p> <p>- At KMVS, the possibility of two-way communication was explored by setting up a IVR helpline for EWRs to call in with their queries.</p> <p>- At IT for Change and ANANDI, the IVR network idea took shape as a strategy for targeted outreach by infomediaries to women leaders and members of women's collectives.</p> <p>- There has been considerable excitement about these messages, with a progressive gender-based slant and timely communication of otherwise hard-to-get information.</p>	<p>- In this project, 2 possibilities for setting up IVR systems, have been explored - going with a private service provider (KMVS) and developing and operating a customised Open Source IVR platform (IT for Change and ANANDI).</p> <p>- While the latter option is of course more cost-effective in the long term, the project experience reveals that the limited number of features available in open source IVR platforms, and the time investments involved in developing additional features, and the difficulties for first-time computer users to navigate non-graphical interfaces, make them a less appropriate option in short-term projects.</p>
<p>4. Establishment of information</p>	<p>- 6 block level information centres and 11 cluster level information centres were</p>	<p>- Infomediary trainings will continue to be important at all sites, when</p>

Strategies	Did you achieve the result you had hoped? Was this successful?	Any lessons/learnings w.r.t taking this forward?
centres	<p>planned to be set up, and this target has been achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A major challenge has been community members' ridicule and hostility towards infomediaries, but this was successfully negotiated at all sites. - Web-based information portal to support the work of the infomediaries has been developed at KMVS and IT for Change sites ; and IVR messaging for targeted information outreach has been set up at IT for Change and ANANDI sites. - Information centres are a success because as outlined in Question 4., at all 3 sites, they are moving towards institutionalization. 	<p>taking this strategy forward. This is the backbone of any strategy to democratise public information access in which women are at the centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This experience has demonstrated three viable models for developing community info-centres: info-centres housed in <i>Panchayat</i> premises managed by EWR federations, info-centres housed in community buildings managed by women's collectives, and info-centres housed in the <i>Panchayat</i> and managed by a Committee comprising representatives from the <i>Panchayat</i>, as well as women's collectives. - The limitations of connectivity architecture - especially broadband - must be addressed, before further digital innovations can take off, at the existing info-centres. This requires interventions from state actors - and IT for Change has initiated a national-level advocacy effort on community broadband to bring stakeholders together to explore alternative local broadband models.
5. Community radio and community video to create alternative discourses on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At both KMVS and IT for Change², community radio was a key media strategy. Endline Focus Group Discussions conducted by the evaluation team and process documentation of the project team testify to the power of community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovative video formats (especially 'quick and dirty' videos that have a small file size) need to be explored. As smart phone penetration increases in the coming years, community video content

2 Upto September 2014 at the IT for Change site, when the Gynavani FM channel which used to carry the weekly community radio broadcast, was taken off by AIR, for non-payment of dues.

Strategies	Did you achieve the result you had hoped? Was this successful?	Any lessons/learnings w.r.t taking this forward?
gender and governance	<p>radio in promoting women's participation in <i>Mahila Gram Sabhas</i> and village level forums – at both sites.</p> <p>– 21 Community videos have been produced under the project, across the 3 sites, on a wide range of thematic areas: <i>Mahila gram sabhas</i>, inspirational stories of individual women leaders, community level struggles led by EWRs etc. As the final evaluation report highlights, though only a few of the EWRs have participated in video production processes, the wide range of strategies adopted for dissemination have ensured that videos are able to catalyse debates and dialogues on prevailing social norms curtailing women's participation in local governance.</p>	<p>that can be circulated on Whatsapp. Mobile apps can become an effective (and crucial) outreach strategy, even as the value of getting together, creating and consuming media collectively, will remain vital.</p>
6. Information Fairs	<p>– At all 3 sites, information fairs proved to be extremely useful forums for introducing women from the wider community to the power of digital technologies.</p>	<p>– Issue-specific information fairs (ICTs and health, ICTs and education etc.) may be useful to explore in the future.</p>
7. Jan Sunwais (public hearings)	<p>– At the KMVS site, <i>Jan Sunwais</i> organised under the project provided an equal platform to community members, EWRs and government officials for dialoguing constructively to address issues.</p>	<p>– Block and district level <i>Jan Sunwais</i> clubbed with GIS presentations of social audits may be a useful strategy in continuing the fight for accountable local governance.</p>
8. GIS-enabled participatory mapping	<p>This was completed only at the IT for Change site. Though points mapping was conducted for a PDS survey at the KMVS site, and for single women's access to entitlements at the ANANDI site, the time was too short to complete the visual representation of the data collected, and generate a GIS map. Both organisations are using the data collected for their ongoing work.</p>	<p>The time for GIS mapping was underestimated in this project. But IT for Change's experience reveals that GIS mapping certainly creates “<i>moments of truth</i>” in citizen-state dialogue, which help in shaking up existing power relations.</p>

6.The Unexpected

Unexpected external events impacting the project:

(a) The project's strategy of organising *Mahila Gram Sabhas* received a boost across all 3 sites, due to the unexpected actions of line departments in Gujarat and Karnataka, as detailed below. In October 2013, the state government of Gujarat issued a letter in October 2013, advising *Gram Panchayats* to organise *Mahila Sabhas*. Strategically deploying this letter in their specific sites, KMVS and ANANDI have succeeded in pushing the *Gram Panchayats* in their respective operational areas, to convene *Mahila Gram Sabhas* before the official *Gram Sabha*, and ensure that the agenda and resolutions passed by the *Mahila Gram Sabha* are carried forward. Similarly in July 2014, the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, issued a circular to all *Gram Panchayats* mandating the organising of *Mahila Sabhas* to discuss women's issues and concerns. The IT for Change team used this opening to push for these forums at the village level.

(b) IT for Change's weekly community radio programme, '*Kelu Sakhi*', used to be broadcast on the *Gyanvani* FM channel of Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), every Monday night, between 9.00 and 9.30 pm, and was a core strategy in *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count* for rapport-building with male *Panchayat* members and *Panchayat* officials, and enabling dialogue between elected women and geographically dispersed women's collectives. However, in September 2014, All India Radio took the channel off air, for non-payment of dues by IGNOU. This was a major set-back as the community radio was the media strategy with the widest outreach. But the team rallied against this setback, and has tried to cut losses by investing in enhancing the outreach of the video strategy – through the development of innovative formats like the video newsletter.

(c) *Mahila Samakhya's* (MS) withdrawal from Mysore district in September 2014 was also a key concern for IT for Change, as the block information centres of IT for Change were housed in the Federation offices of the MS programme, and managed by the block-level executive committees of the Federation. Upon withdrawal, the Federations were expected to raise their own resources to support their activities, and this pressure distracted them from the core work of the information centres. Attendance at the monthly review meetings of the block information centres went down, and there was even talk among some of the Federation members to monetise the public information outreach functions of the centres entirely, as a strategy to raise funds – an idea completely inimical to the core philosophy of removing barriers to information access for the most marginalised, guiding the centres' functioning. However, the IT for Change team spent a lot of energies in reinvigorating the info-centres. and even helped Federation members relocate to alternative premises to carry on their work and that of the centre.

What was unexpected in terms of stakeholder responses:

At the KMVS site: The initiative demonstrated by many of the *Panchayats* in the project area to engage in local level action on issues such as irregularities in the functioning of the Public Distribution System and allotment of ration cards, misappropriation of grants etc. – through *Jansunwais* (public hearings), rallies, dialogue with government officials and mobilizing support from communities in other villages; exceed all expectations of the project team.

At the ANANDI site: The determination of the members of *Mahila Swaraj Manch* to overcome their initial fear of technologies and their enthusiasm to master the various ICT tools the project introduced them to, exceeded the expectations of the ANANDI team.

At the IT for Change site: The rapport-building process with *Panchayats* brought far more gains than was

initially anticipated. In the words of one team member, “At the start of the project, we had to visit the *Panchayat* countless times and stand outside for hours together, before we got a chance to meet the President or the *Panchayat* Development Officer. But now, just a year later, they telephone us and give a formal appointment, inviting us to come over.”

7. Change in Power Relationships

Right from the start, the stories of change in the narrative reports have flagged the numerous power shifts enabled by the project – at the individual and institutional level – and this section attempts a broad overview:

1. Across the three sites, there are numerous instances of the project strategies enabling elected women to claim their rightful place in the *Panchayat*, and become flag-bearers of the women's agendas in their constituencies. Ishitaba, *Sarpanch* of the Paliwad *Panchayat* in Kutch district, after becoming associated with the *Gram Shashini Manch* and attending *Manch* events, and enrolling on the IVR platform, gained the confidence to take a stand on key issues in her community, and assert her right to participate, challenging the domination of the elected male representatives. Umaban, an EWR from Sanosara *Panchayat* in Bhavnagar district, used to be at the receiving end of abuse and insinuations (of being a 'bad woman') from the male members and officials in her *Panchayat*, when she used to come to the *Panchayat* office to help women of her village, access entitlements. But today she has gained the confidence and the strength to fight this everyday battle due to her association with the *Mahila Swaraj Manch*, especially with the activities of the cluster information centre and the team of infomediaries. Similarly, EWR Shobha from Uyigodanahalli *Panchayat*, after participating in the “networking meeting” organised by IT for Change and being a part of a community video-enabled dialogue on the need for elected women to foreground women's needs and priorities, took the initiative to fight for the entitlement-claim of a marginalised woman in her constituency for allotment of benefits under a state housing scheme, even challenging her male counterparts in the *Panchayat*.

2. The ICT strategies of the project have played a key role in facilitating power shifts, especially at the individual level. Technology access and use are liberating experiences. For example, at the IT for Change site, the digital photography trainings organised by the project have helped Chinnamma, an EWR from Thumbasoge *Panchayat*, Mysore district, utilise her newly acquired camera-handling skills to take charge of official documentation of *Panchayat* events, and this has raised her status in the eyes of male *Panchayat* members and other members of the community. Similarly, Radha, the infomediary of the Attiguppe information centre, who is a young dalit woman, is now invited to *Panchayat* events and given formal speaking slots to talk about the work of the centre; and officials have started pro-actively reaching out to her in her role as infomediary, to update her on schemes and other governance updates. Thus, her institutional role of the infomediary has helped Radha gain status and recognition in her dealings with community members and with officialdom. In Bhavnagar, the *Mahila Swaraj Manch's* mobile data-base is very valued by local authorities, and has contributed to the credibility of the women's platform

3. The project has facilitated institutional shifts in power as well – through the GIS-enabled participatory mapping exercises of subsidy allocation, social audits of PDS and school infrastructure and *Jan Sunwais* (public hearings).

4. The community media strategy has certainly sowed the seeds of a discursive shift on gender and governance, in the local public sphere – by helping women question internalised gender norms. For example, in Khijadiya village, Bhavnagar district, after viewing the inspirational video-stories of EWRs that were created by the *Mahila Swaraj Manch*, women who participated in the screening, said : “For us, the home and farm are all we know. *Mahila Swaraj Manch* should screen this film to members of our households and then the men will see why we should do away with old customs and practices. (In) Our lives,

(we) are stuck continuously negotiating old practices and customs. We are very excited after watching this CD and want to change things in our homes. Or else, the home, farm and cooking stove is all we will live to understand”.

5. It is important to assert here that the narrative of power shifts cannot be a linear one – for shifts in power in the institutional and social and personal domains, that are colored by the play of gender power, are often accompanied by a backlash from those individuals or groups whose power is threatened. Thus, women who speak up in public meetings or women who gain the confidence to perform the role of infomediaries, may be subject to domestic violence on an everyday basis (as household power shifts, and the husband becomes insecure). Similarly, active women leaders who question male *Panchayat* members may be silenced through character-assassination.

Therefore, many a time, the work that the project has had to do is make trade-offs and facilitate short-term gains, while being cognizant of the need for deeper and sustained change. This was especially important as the project's site – the *Gram Panchayat* – is one that is caught in the thick of multiple power struggles. For example, as the KMVS team has highlighted, when setting up infocentres in *Panchayats*, a strategy of negotiation rather than confrontation has been adopted, to overcome men's opposition to women playing the role of the infomediary.

6. Finally, it is important to highlight here that not all shifts in power can be solely attributed to project efforts. The project can only play a minor part in the larger historical continuum of social change – and there are other contextual factors at play. This is best illustrated when we examine the case of the *Mahila Gram Sabhas*. At all sites, the very fact that without any social disruption, *Mahila Gram Sabhas* became a social event, clearly indicates a larger gender-based shift at work, in the public-political life of the communities the project has worked with.

8. Partnerships between lead and co-lead and other organizations

For IT for Change, KMVS and ANANDI, *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count* has been much more than a project – it has been a shared journey of utilising the ICT opportunity for feminist constituency building informed by a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. Right from the project inception, when the theory of change was constructed, to project management, and to commissioning the evaluation, a process of shared decision-making has been followed. There has been a conscious effort to focus on creating spaces for the organisations to learn from one another – whether it be the partner meetings at six-monthly intervals, the exposure visits of the project teams to the sites of the other organisations, or the community video, GIS and wiki trainings organised by IT for Change, for KMVS and ANANDI.

9. Involvement of beneficiaries

In the major strategies adopted by the project, a lot of attention has been devoted towards meaningful beneficiary involvement processes, as detailed below:

a. Mahila Gram Sabhas: Obtaining buy-in from elected women representatives and women from the community through holding community screenings on the concept of *Mahila Gram Sabhas*, building linkages between former and current EWRs through block level meetings.

b. Establishment of IVR-based peer networking platform: Deciding on the timing of the IVR broadcast after a community survey to assess women's preferences, creating a IVR helpline to facilitate two-way communication, training women community leaders and infomediaries in content production.

c. Information centres: Creation of participatory management processes such as monthly Managing Committee meetings involving key stakeholders from the community; targeted outreach to most marginalised groups.

d. Community radio and community video processes: Participatory content production with inputs from women community leaders and EWRs, training infomediaries and women from the community in videography and recording audio-content so that they can slowly emerge as community reporters.

Processes have followed iterative cycles of shared ideation, strategy development, review, monitoring and course-changes with the beneficiaries. Despite time constraints women in contexts of poverty and livelihoods challenges have been extremely supportive of our efforts. We are thankful to them for this. The pre-existing rapport did play an important role in this, as also the fact that there is a sense of hope and romanticism associated with technology based processes. Information access and collective support mechanisms of the project have been appreciated by the beneficiaries. The work of the participating NGOs, will continue to build on the project's learnings.

10. Impact on future plans

1. The three partnering organisations will continue their work in the area of grassroots political mobilisation beyond the life of the project – through continued engagement with the women's CBOs, EWR Federations and *Gram Panchayats* that have been a part of the project at the respective sites. These work areas have always been significant and even central to the organisations. Connecting civic groups of women/ women in leadership positions has been a valuable strategy prior to the project, and hence, newer activity cycles – such as work with newly elected women, refining the information centres' strategies, etc - will be introduced in these sites, even though the project has come to a close.

2. One of the main innovations of this project was its deployment of the techno-social opportunity for enhancing women's participation in local governance and building a vibrant women's political constituency by strengthening linkages between elected women and women's collectives. The project partners will continue to take forward the exploration and experimentation of these tools – such as community media, IVR networking, web-based information portals etc. at their respective sites. Here, we wish to highlight that digital innovation is a moving target. Therefore, taking the existing work forward involves focusing energies on further innovations such as developing video newsletters that can be circulated on the mobile phone, perfecting the utility of GIS-enabled mapping with infographics and local language 'legends' etc. The scope for experimentation and learning is tremendous and the time cycle of a single project may not be adequate for realising the potential of ICTs.

3. The three partnering organisations recognise that policy advocacy is a key strategy for ensuring scaling-up and replication of the good practices of this programme. KMVS and ANANDI have been engaged in advocacy efforts towards ensuring that *Mahila Gram Sabhas* become institutionalized as mandatory forums at the *Panchayat* level. IT for Change has been taking the insights from the programme on the digital opportunity for strengthening gender-responsive local governance into key spaces such as the national level Workshop for supporting state governments to develop *Gram Panchayat* Development Plans, organised by the Ministry of *Panchayati Raj*, Government of India in July 2015; and the consultation organised by the High Power Committee working on the Karnataka *Panchayati Raj* Amendment Act 1993, in July 2014. These efforts will continue as and when opportunities present themselves, in the external environment.

11. Communications and Knowledge Management

- a. Policy Brief prepared by IT for Change, KMVS and ANANDI in April 2015, on 'Fostering an ICT-enabled local governance system on enabling women's political empowerment'.
- b. Process documentation from IT for Change and KMVS sites on project experience.
- c. Films (detailed list provided below):

IT for Change

1. Women's political participation- digitally enabled pathways

This film highlights the key ICT-enabled strategies utilised by the Making Women's Voices and Votes Count project at the Mysore site, to facilitate the emergence of women-only village assemblies or *Mahila Gram Sabhas*, at the grassroots.

2. How we used GIS for social audit

This film showcases the key highlights of a GIS-based social audit that the *Prakriye* field centre of IT for Change carried out, on the allotment of subsidies under the universal sanitation programme, in Thumbsoge *Panchayat*, Mysore district.

3. Know your *Gram Sabha*

This Digital Story describes the *Gram Sabha* (village assembly) and the importance of women's participation in this process.

4. Should women participate in the *Panchayat*?

This film describes the importance of women's participation in local governance processes. In addition to women's reflections about their experiences of engaging with their *Panchayats*, the perspectives of a woman *Panchayat* Development Officer and a senior trainer who has long engaged with questions of gender and governance, are also covered.

5. What I think is my role as an elected leader

This film critically examines the roles and responsibilities that elected women have to undertake, in order to assert their political voice, effectively.

6. Women leaders in their multiple roles

This film is an inspirational biopic about Sunanda Jayaram, an elected woman member of the *Zilla Parishad* (district level local government body) and a popular farmers' movements' leader, in Karnataka – especially focusing on how she straddles her public and private roles.

7. Moonlight Dinner

This film showcases monthly dinners organized by women's collectives. The women come together with their favorite food items and share with each other the nutritional value of the food they bring – but this event is much more than an awareness-generation programme. It is an affirmation of the solidarity of women's collectives.

9. *Namma Mahiti Kendra* (Our Information Centre)

This film describes the establishment of an information centre in Attiguppe village in Karnataka. It discusses the functions of the information centre, the roles of the infomediary and the management committee in running the centre, and the changes it has brought about in the village.

10. *Mahila Gram Sabha*- a pathway to participation

This film looks at the role of *Mahila Gram Sabhas* in helping women table their agendas in local governance processes.

KMVS

1. Raising women's voices through *Mahila Gram Sabha*: Anandsar story

This film portrays the story of Sushilaben, an EWR in Anandsar village, who took the initiative to call a special *Gram Sabha* to address the issue of alcohol abuse.

2. Content and ideation meeting for radio

This film looks at how content committee meetings become a space for EWRs to hone their

perspectives on gender and governance.

3. Social audit process and its impacts

This film is about the social audit on the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme conducted at Devisar village.

4. Impact of industries

This film examines the impact of industries on traditional occupations, through the eyes of Kailasba, the woman *sarpanch* of Bhadreshwar village in Mundra block.

5. Impact of transmission lines on grazing land

This film describes the ways in which improperly laid transmission lines pose a threat to the grazing land of communities (and cattle), adversely affecting local livelihoods.

6. Mahila Gramsabha process

This film highlights how *Mahila Gram Sabhas* create an impact through stories from the villages of Mundra.

7. Awareness about Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

This film educates communities about the legal provisions governing SEZs.

8. Biodiversity act and its provisions

This video discusses the biodiversity act and its provisions. It was made with the objective to conserve biodiversity in the wake of industrialization.

9. Jan Samwad on health

KMVS organised a Jan Samwad (public dialogue with government officials) on the issue of health. This was recorded, and edited, and screened before other Panchayats, to motivate them to take up similar initiatives.

10. Experiences in leveraging mobile technology

This film portrays the stories of experiences of EWRs of the IVRS system and the mobile as a tool.

11. Navinal movement against PDS misappropriation

This narrates the story of Navinal village which started a movement against the block officer and block level supply officer over the misappropriation of PDS rations, which compelled local authorities to intervene in the matter.

ANANDI

1. Mahila Swaraj Manch: Ek Jhalak

This film focuses on the historical evolution of the work of the *Mahila Swaraj Manch*.

2. Film on the *anganwadi* in Amla village

This film, through its narrative of the establishment of a new *anganwadi* in Amla village, describes the various services that an *anganwadi* provides to children, and pregnant and lactating women. It also includes an interview of the *anganwadi* worker about her role and responsibilities.

3. The story of Arunaben, Sarpanch Bhudna Village, Shihor block

This film focuses on the story of Arunaben, the *sarpanch* of Bhudna village, and her work in the village. It looks at the issues she has tackled which include issues of violence against women and sexual harassment, and how she may inspire other women to take up leadership in their own villages.

4. Beheno No Sandesh Ane Gaam No Vikas

This film looks at the struggles faced by *sangathan* members as they move out of the domestic

space and start participating in the *panchayat* and collective meetings to bring up issues of development for their village.

5: The story of Meghawadar na Sarpanch Hansaben

This film portrays the story of Hansaben, the *sarpanch* of the Meghawadar *panchayat*. While she was initially disengaged from political processes in her village, the film focuses on how she learned about her role through *Mahila Swaraj manch* meetings, after which she started taking up issues such as water scarcity and women's security.

6. Rasila Ben, Sarpanch of Navagam

This film is the story of how Rasilaben, the *sarpanch* of Navagam village, has played an active role in monitoring and protecting natural resources in her village. In addition to this, it describes her active commitment to issues of justice in the village, in spite of resistance from her family to her active public-political engagement.

7. Meenaben's work on education

This film portrays the story of Meenaben from Piparla village, who is a core EWR and a member of the school development and management committee at the *Panchayat* level, and has worked extensively on the issue of education in her village. It focuses on her message about the importance of education, her initiative in monitoring the village school and encouraging parents to send their children to school, and her work on creating awareness about this issue.

8. Ilaben, Sarpanch of Parapan village-cluster

This film represents the story of Ilaben, the *sarpanch* of Padapan village, and her struggle to improve the condition of the village school, and create a greener campus.

9. Mahila Swaraj Manch and Technology

The film tries to document the journey of *Mahila Swaraj Manch* in using various forms of technology (such as IVR messaging and community video) to strengthen governance at the village and block level ; and their endeavor to use technology as a medium for greater accountability in governance systems.

12. Feedback for the Fund for Gender Equality

We (IT for Change, KMVS and ANANDI) appreciate the various efforts made by UN Women to connect grantees to various policy-oriented forums and processes, such as :

- a. UN Women Partners' Meet, October 2013 which aimed at developing a shared research, programme and advocacy agenda on women's economic rights and security (New Delhi)
- b. India CSO National Consultation on the Beijing Platform for Action (BpFA), August 2014, organised by the Beijing+20 Working Group comprising of Civil Society Organisations and UN Women Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) and UN Women (New Delhi)
- c. The Mobile Learning Week (Feb 2015), organised by UNESCO in partnership with UN Women (Paris).
- d. The 'Girls in ICT' event (April 2015) organised by the Asia Pacific Telecentre Network (APTN) and the Research Center of Communication and Development Knowledge Management (CCDKM) of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand, in the context of the ITU's 150th anniversary.

On a separate note, we would like to reiterate that UN Women and the FGE must focus on supporting efforts that aim at constructing long-term, organic, community-centred conscientisation and critical learning-action processes to gender the local public sphere and local governance structures. This is because work towards the capacity-building of EWRs, and building a women's constituency is an intensive, sustained, long-term endeavour.

13. Other Observations and Learning

1. The experiences under '*Making Women's Voices and Votes Count*' clearly indicate that the project of building the institutional capacities of women's organisations in appropriating digital technologies in contextually meaningful ways (in political mobilisation at the grass-roots, in informational outreach, in local campaigns etc.), is a long-term endeavour. It is over-simplistic to assume that the competence and sophistication that is required for this can be completely transferred to women leaders on the ground, in a short time frame of two years. However, what is important to recognise is that this short time frame has been more than adequate to introduce women leaders to the idea that digital technologies are political artefacts with specific functionalities that can be leveraged in their ongoing work. Technological expertise is certainly demystifiable - but it is an intensive process. As has been testified by the skills demonstrated by young infomediaries, women's capacities to creatively deploy digital technologies may far exceed the project's initial expectations, but the need for ongoing training and trouble shooting cannot be overemphasised.
2. The question of what may be the optimal level of investment in the enskilling and technical expertise-training of women community leaders and members of CBOs is a contingent one, and can be answered only in situated ways. What is adequate and appropriate investment in ICT capacity-building is a matter of the choices that women's organisations make, based on their analysis of available resources at a particular juncture. Cost-benefit analysis of choices is crucial to making such decisions. For example, using a third party IVR service provider may pose questions about long-term vendor dependencies and lock-ins, but may free up more time of staff members and women community leaders for innovative content production and brainstorming on new functionalities. Similarly, deciding that the technical process of video editing will be handled by team members, while skills-training on story-board development and videography will be carried out by community leaders means that the burdens on women at the grassroots are lessened, even if video expertise is not fully transferred. But on the whole, it is important to recognise that there are right or wrong choices in this regard, and tradeoffs may be necessary.
3. Since innovations in the digital arena are so rapid, organisations need dedicate the time/ resources needed to democratise skill building internally, so that the grassroots movement building work is strengthened. Institutional capacity-building in terms of appropriating the digital opportunity cannot be a one-time exercise. It involves spirals of 'learning' and 'unlearning' and keeping pace with technological leapfrogging.
4. A supportive policy environment is critical to triggering grassroots level innovations among women's collectives and CBOs. Affordable access to broadband, mobile Internet, local language fonts, software and content, and a legal environment that protects free expression and association in the digital context. a strong legal-regulatory environment to address censorship and surveillance, are all, part of this overall climate. In our project, the absence of guarantees to universal access and the lack of well designed state-supported digital literacy and pro-citizen content was certainly an impediment.