

# Impact Assessment Study of Holistic Rural Development Programme (HRDP) Kanker, Chhattisgarh – P0302



Prepared For:



**HDFC Bank Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Prepared By:



**Intellecip Advisory Pvt Ltd.**

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## Executive Summary

The study by Intellectap centres on measuring the impact of the Holistic Rural Development Programme (HRDP) of HDFC Bank that was implemented by Udyogini in the Kanker district of Chhattisgarh during November 2019 to October 2022. The main goal of the HRDP project in Kanker was to uplift marginalised rural communities by enhancing the skills and abilities of both individuals and groups. This study largely focused on understanding the overall process that the HDFC Bank and the implementing organisation undertook in carrying out the project activities, the key milestones achieved, the impact created by these activities, and the challenges faced. The framework used for the impact assessment was an adaptive version of the DAC criteria - Relevance, Effectiveness, and Sustainability. A comprehensive methodology, comprising both qualitative and quantitative primary data collection, was used for the assessment which was carried out in a participatory manner involving all the key stakeholders of the project. The quantitative study included a sample size of 427 beneficiaries as respondents from the 12 project villages.

The primary objective of this project was to enhance the well-being of 1000 families in the designated project area by providing sustainable livelihood opportunities. These included activities like gathering forest produce and adding value to it, raising livestock, and initiating small-scale businesses. A key emphasis was placed on women's empowerment through the establishment of women-centred institutions capable of overseeing various projects and leading market activities. Women Enterprise Groups (WEGs) were created to participate in educational initiatives, teach farmers scientific methods related to lac farming, poultry farming, and mushroom cultivation. To increase the value of the produced items, four processing units were established for lac, tamarind, custard apple, and mushroom spawn. In addition to this, breed farms, night shelters, and goat platforms were implemented for the benefit of farmers. Furthermore, the establishment of a Farmers Producer Company (FPC) aimed to empower members, manage produce efficiently, and ensure access to markets.

The deployment of 100 solar street lights across 12 project villages has brought significant benefits beyond just lighting up the streets. A quantitative analysis reveals their crucial role in ensuring night-time safety, particularly against wild animals, addressing concerns expressed by 82 percent of respondents. Notably, **97 percent acknowledge their positive impact on creating a secure environment for women**. With only 1 percent reporting no benefit, these lights signify a transformative force, enhancing safety and mobility. The responsibility for repairs falls on the Village Development Committee (VDC), ensuring sustained functionality.

Each WEG focused on specific ventures such as lac, tamarind, custard apple procurement and backyard poultry management. With support from HDFC and Udyogini, the WEGs established brood farms and engaged in market activities, earning profits and reducing middlemen involvement. Despite facing challenges such as limited market access and financial resources, HDFC provided crucial support through bank linkages, training, and initial capital investment. These efforts led to a significant improvement in members' monthly income, highlighting the success of the enterprise model. Key findings reveal that 39 percent experienced steady income, 23 percent initiated new ventures, and 47 percent saw income growth. Moreover, 52 percent increased savings, 31 percent expanded businesses, and 26 percent gained new skills. Notably, **62 percent reported business activities as an additional household income source**, enhancing overall welfare. These results underscore the project's positive impact on financial stability, entrepreneurship, and household well-being.



Four processing units were established by different WEGs to enhance their skills and add more value to their products. In Sureli village, the Shree Sai Nath Mahila Udyam Samuh initiated a lac processing unit with assistance from HDFC Bank, covering the machine costs, while the members contributed to other expenses. They acquired a building from the Panchayat, installed the machines, and underwent training on their usage. The unit became profitable enough to cover its costs in the first year, allowing the repayment of loans to the FPC. In Kapsi village, Udyogini and HDFC Bank collaborated to establish a Tamarind Processing Unit with a newly formed WEG. Eleven members secured employment there and acquired skills in tamarind processing. Despite encountering challenges, such as occasional machine breakdowns, the group persevered, demonstrating resilience and determination to overcome obstacles.

In Domahara village, the Nari Shakti Mahila Samuh established a successful Custard Apple processing unit with support from HDFC Bank. The WEG received specialised training in pulp making and utilised essential machinery provided by HDFC Bank. In their inaugural year, they procured custard apples from local farmers, achieving a turnover of Rs 43,000 and a profit of Rs 16,000. Encouraged by their success, they secured a loan of Rs 60,000 from the FPC to reinvest in the enterprise. **With consistent growth, they anticipate a profit of Rs 75,000 this year, showcasing their entrepreneurial skill.**

Starting with 10 members, a WEG initiated mushroom spawn production with support from HDFC Bank. Despite initial challenges in acquiring electricity and securing a suitable location, the WEG persevered and transformed a Panchayat building into a productive centre. With crucial support from HDFC, including machinery and tools, **they steadily increased their profits over three years, reaching an impressive Rs. 56,000.** Their outreach expanded significantly, selling mushroom spawn in 35 villages, and involving more farmers. Additionally, the active participation of WEG members contributed to the enterprise's success, highlighting their commitment and entrepreneurial spirit.

In response to challenges faced by local farmers in Kanker block, **Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited was established to streamline agricultural supply chains and increase farmers' earnings.** Founded in 2021, the FPC aimed to address income loss caused by selling produce through intermediaries. With initial contributions from directors and support from Udyogini and HDFC Bank, the FPC focused on collective marketing and processing of agricultural and forest products. However, despite initial successes, the FPC had to deal with leadership challenges related to gender issues, leading to communication breakdowns and disrupted operations. To overcome these challenges, the FPC prioritised collaboration and reconciliation efforts. By acknowledging past mistakes and committing to improved cooperation, they aimed to rebuild trust and strengthen their impact on sustainable farming practices.

The implementation of scientific cultivation practices has been instrumental in increasing annual incomes within diverse horticultural sectors. Before the integration of these project promoted methodologies, the average annual income derived from horticulture was fixed at Rs. 3400, reflecting the economic status quo. However, with the adoption of project promoted techniques, there has been a remarkable increase in annual income to Rs. 5000, constituting a notable **47 percent increase.** Presently, the total household income stands at Rs. 65000, with horticulture contributing approximately 8 percent. This demonstrates a considerable shift, as horticulture now accounts for 14 percent of the income generated from cultivation, highlighting its increasing importance. Significant advancements are evident in specific sectors: tamarind cultivation (N=20) has witnessed a 25 percent increase in income, rising from Rs. 4000 to Rs. 5000; **custard apple**

**(N=26) has experienced a 50 percent growth, soaring from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000; and lac cultivation (N=60) has seen a remarkable 67 percent increase, shifting from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000** in horticulture. This positive trend underscores the substantial economic benefits stemming from scientific cultivation activities, notably supported by initiatives such as the Package on Scientific Lac Cultivation (PSLC). The enhanced incomes are largely attributable to the adoption of refined farming techniques, resulting in amplified yields and the production of higher-quality crops.

Through collaborative efforts, 500 individual night shelters were constructed with support from HDFC, providing essential materials, while farmers contributed bricks and cement. Farmers received comprehensive training in poultry management and healthcare, taking initiative in deworming and vaccination. Ten breed farms for poultry were established, enhancing management practices through training sessions and electricity connections for better care. Additionally, 50 goat platforms were built, resulting in increased herd size and decreased mortality rates, with producers receiving on-field training. The interventions led to a notable **increase in annual income from Rs. 5500 to Rs. 7000 for goats and a doubling of income for poultry units, representing an increase of Rs. 1000 per unit**. These improvements signify the positive impact on livestock management and income generation in the project villages.

To ensure the project's effectiveness and sustainability, several strategic actions are recommended. Firstly, **organizing training sessions for WEG members on market dynamics, pricing strategies, and consumer demands will empower them to make informed decisions and secure better deals**. Secondly, tackling transportation hurdles by exploring economical solutions and establishing a collective transportation network will streamline product distribution. Thirdly, fostering skill development among WEG members and granting access to modern technologies will bolster their competitiveness and market outreach. Fourthly, instituting a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will facilitate early problem detection and enable necessary adjustments to the project strategy. Lastly, addressing maintenance issues with the tamarind processing unit's machinery, providing technical training to members, and ensuring the availability of spare parts are essential to prevent disruptions in production. By implementing these measures, the project can enhance its impact and ensure its long-term viability, leading to tangible benefits for the communities involved.

# 1 Introduction

HDFC Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives encompass a comprehensive approach to rural development. A flagship programme under this initiative is the "Holistic Rural Development Programme" (HRDP), which provides support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) nationwide to implement development interventions. The programme aims to create sustainable, socio-economically and ecologically developed communities that are happy and prosperous. The HRDP is currently being implemented in 12 villages situated in the Kanker block of Kanker district within a radius of 25 km from the block. In this area, the community is struggling to access better and remunerative market opportunities. Though area is close to district headquarters, the struggle for irreversible livelihood is quite high. Despite the good availability of natural resources, the absence of the use of technology, better management practices, and knowledge and skills within the community is hindering the attainment of better production and prices.

Value chains in the area are influenced by a set of specificities that provide comparative advantages but, at the same time, present challenges in reaping higher returns. These specificities, such as the availability of unique and niche products and services, limited accessibility, fragility, diversity, and marginality, have a strong impact on value chain analysis and the selection of value chain development options. The degradation of the natural environment, particularly through the destruction of forests and a rapidly shrinking resource base, has had an impact on the status of women. The selection of villages for the project was carried out in collaboration with HDFC Bank's local team members. These villages were chosen based on their socio-economic disadvantage and the need for development interventions. Through this project, HDFC Bank aims to uplift the lives of communities by addressing their holistic development needs. This involves equipping individuals with skills for economic independence and creating a conducive ecosystem for better living conditions. By focusing on these key areas, the project strives to bring about positive and sustainable change in the targeted villages, ultimately improving the overall well-being of the residents. There was no further opportunity for Natural Resource Management (NRM) in the project village, and the planned areas like health and education had to be abandoned by the implementation partner due to the impact of Covid-19.

## 1.1 About HRDP

HDFC Bank's primary CSR initiative is the HRDP under the Parivartan umbrella. This initiative involves collaboration with NGOs across the country, providing them with support for development interventions in enterprise and infrastructure. The primary goal is to align skill training and livelihood enhancement with comprehensive rural development. In essence, the aim is to uplift the lives of people in rural communities through sustainable socio-economic transformation and ecological development. This is achieved through a holistic approach addressing various facets of their needs. The development of human capital, recognising the importance of empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and professional growth, is a crucial aspect. Economic independence is a key theme within HRDP, manifested through initiatives focused on skilling and providing livelihood opportunities. Relevant skills are imparted, and avenues for sustainable livelihoods are created, aiming to reduce dependency and promote self-sufficiency among the rural populace.



The final pillar of HRDP's multifaceted strategy is enhancing living conditions. By addressing the broader socio-economic landscape and providing the necessary tools for self-improvement, a positive transformation in the quality of life for individuals in rural communities is envisioned. As a catalyst for positive change in rural India, HRDP operates, aligning with HDFC Bank's commitment to corporate social responsibility. By focusing on human capital development, resource management, and economic independence, a sustainable and inclusive model for rural development is aimed for, going beyond immediate needs and contributing to the long-term well-being of these communities.

## 1.2 Objectives of Impact Assessment

The impact assessment aims to understand

- The overall process undertaken for implementing HRDP activities
- Key milestones achieved
- Impact created by HRDP activities
- Challenges faced and how they were managed

The guiding philosophy behind this assessment is to add value by showcasing successful initiatives and recommending possible ways to address existing challenges. It seeks to:

- Critically and objectively evaluate implementation and performance
- Determine reasons for certain outcomes or lack thereof
- Derive lessons learned and good practices
- Provide evidence-based findings to inform future operational and strategic decisions while planning and funding partner organisations

This assessment was also an opportunity to assess the on-ground relevance and effectiveness of the project.

## 1.3 About the Project

An extensive and impartial report, conducted by a third-party entity, has evaluated HDFC Bank's HRDP implemented in the disadvantaged region of Kanker district as part of the Parivartan initiative. The programme, executed by Udyogini, the implementing partner in this district, spanned from Nov 2019 to October 2022, covering interventions in twelve villages. The primary objective was to facilitate the sustainable development of marginalised rural communities by enhancing the capabilities of individuals and institutions. The assessment study, which took place from 8th Jan 2024 to 17th Jan 2024, provides insights into the programme's impact and effectiveness in uplifting the targeted communities.

## 1.4 About the Implementing Partner

Established in 1992, Udyogini, meaning Woman Entrepreneur, originated to execute the Women's Enterprise Management Training Outreach Programme (WEMTOP), a World Bank Economic Development Institute project. Over the past 25 years, the organisation has remained dedicated to empowering rural-tribal women by honing their entrepreneurship skills. Udyogini has evolved into a leading NGO, providing tailored "Business Development Services" for rural-tribal women in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand. Focusing on specific product value chains such as lac, poultry, goat, and high-value agricultural crops, the organisation utilises a value chain approach to equip women in these areas with the necessary skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing their income and social status. Additionally, Udyogini

facilitates self-employment and skill-based placements for youth in both urban and rural settings, extending support to other NGOs and government projects through the delivery of its business services.

The HRDP has been implemented by Udyogini in 12 villages of Kanker district, Chhattisgarh, since November 2019, with the support of HDFC Bank CSR Parivartan. Encompassing Enterprise Development, Skill Training, Livelihood Enhancement, and supporting infrastructure, the project aims to ensure positive growth and development among the community people.

## 2 Research Design and Methodology

The impact assessment used a mixed method that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the impact of the project interventions. The impact assessment process was carried out in a consultative manner engaging with key stakeholders involved in the project design and implementation that includes HDFC Bank and Udyogini.

### 2.1 Criteria for Assessment

The project activities completed by the Udyogini were identified from their project documents, reports and Management Information System (MIS) submissions to the HDFC Bank. The impact of those activities was assessed using the following criteria:

- Relevance and Convergence
- Impact and Effectiveness<sup>1</sup>
- Sustainability

Under the criterion of **relevance and convergence**, the team assessed whether the design of the project interventions was:

- a) Aligned with the State's plans and priorities for rural development.
- b) Relevant to the local needs of the most vulnerable groups.
- c) Convergent with (and making use) of the government's existing resources.
- d) Enabling different stakeholders to work together to achieve the intended outcomes of the programme.

To assess the **impact and effectiveness** of the project, the team established the values of outcome indicators for the interventions. The findings were assessed against these values through identifying qualitative evidence and analysis of project outcomes (in light of variables identified in consultation with HDFC Bank), the team tried to understand whether and how the project impacted the lives of community members in the project areas. The findings from primary quantitative data were substantiated by the information gathered from discussions with the communities/ beneficiaries,

For the criteria of **sustainability**, the team studied the primary data to understand if the project has worked on strengthening the community's capacity, positioned appropriate institutional mechanism to ensure sustainability, and if any of the activities or strategies adopted have been or could be replicated.

### 2.2 Primary and Secondary Data Sources

Primary research included a quantitative household survey that was conducted by the survey team consisting of 5 enumerators and 1 supervisor, with backstopping by one field coordinator. The primary quantitative data were collected using Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) method where we developed a mobile application to collect data. The qualitative research included In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with project beneficiaries and secondary stakeholders such as the team members of Udyogini, the HDFC Bank Programme team from the project area etc. IDIs were

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<sup>1</sup> While from an evaluation perspective impact and effectiveness are two different aspects, in the report, these are used interchangeably.

conducted with the specific individuals who were recipients of the project. The qualitative data collection was conducted by the research team of the study.

**Figure 1: An FGD in Progress**



Secondary data sources included HDFC's CSR Policy, Programme Log Frame (Logical Framework Analysis), Rapid Rural Appraisal Reports, Programme implementation timelines, Communication, and Documentation products, and other relevant reports/literature related to the project.

The outcome mapping and result chain development were undertaken in consultation with the HDFC Bank team.

Standardised key outcomes and indicators were identified interventions. Based on the standardised list of outcomes and outputs, the questionnaire was developed.

### 2.3 Sample Size and Distribution

Beneficiaries for the programme in the 12 villages of Kanker were selected using purposive random sampling, drawing upon a list of beneficiaries provided by Udyogini. Since the selection of beneficiaries was conducted independently for the interventions, it was feasible for multiple beneficiaries to be chosen from a single household. Furthermore, instances occurred where a single beneficiary received support in several intervention areas. The target sample size was set at 400 for the 12 villages, with a total of 427 sample respondents being reached. The coverage of the sample varied across the villages. (see **Error! Reference source not found.1**).

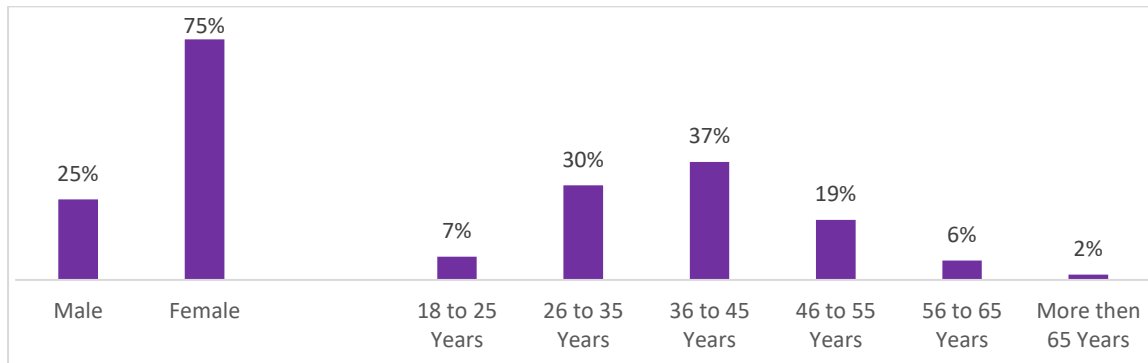
**Table 1: Sample Distribution Village-wise as per the Proportion of the Activity (N=427)**

Village Name	Sample
Sureli	56
Kapsi	56
Bhairadeeh	30
Koliyari	52
Kuretha	24
Domaharra	48
Aaturgaon	27
Patharri	28
Komalpur	23
Lulegondi	26
Kulgaon	27
Gowardhan	30
Total	427

During the course of the study, interviews were conducted with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including lac farmers, livestock owners, breed farm operators, and mushroom cultivators. Additionally, FGDs were facilitated among diverse groups, namely lac farmers, Farmer Producer

Companies (FPCs), Tamarind Processing Unit Women’s Enterprise Groups (WEG), and Custard Apple Processing Unit WEG. KIIs were also carried out with pivotal figures and a staff member associated with the project’s implementing body. The total sample comprises 25% male and 55% female, reflecting the gender distribution of the sample. Similarly, the majority of the sample (92%) represented youth aged 18-55 years, distributed across different age groups. The remaining 8% of the respondents were more than 55 years of age.

**Figure 2: Gender and Age Group-wise Distribution of Sample (N=427)**



## 2.4 Training of Enumerators

A gender-balanced survey team, comprising five local enumerators and one supervisor equipped with the requisite education and experience, was recruited for data collection. Two days of training were imparted to the enumerators and supervisor by the field coordinator and the research coordinator. Throughout the training, the survey team received comprehensive briefings on the project, data collection tools, the utilisation of CAPI, data collection protocols, data quality control, and other relevant aspects. The training programme encompassed both theoretical instruction within a classroom setting and practical mock exercises of the survey tool.

**Figure 3: Enumerators Training at Kanker**

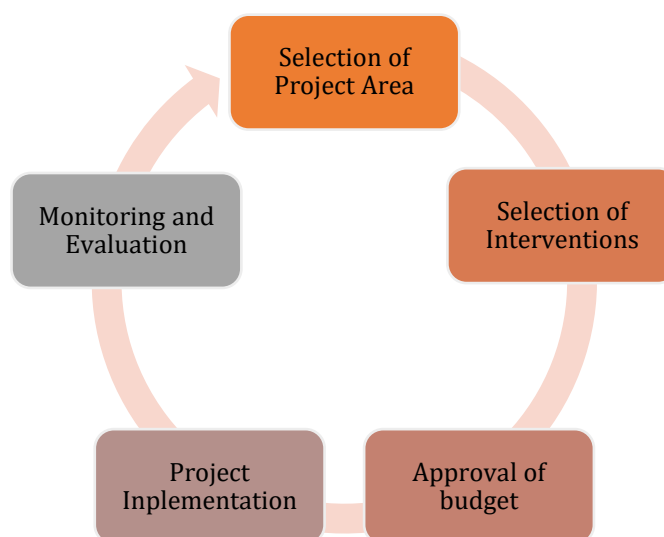




### 3 Review of Project Planning and Implementation

The planning and implementation of the project involve five stages: selection of the project area viz. district, block, villages etc., selection of interventions, approval of budget, project implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Reviews of each of these stages are explained below.

**Figure 4: Planning and Implementation Process**



#### 3.1 Selection of Project Area

Kanker, located in southern Chhattisgarh, India, covers an area of about 5285.01 square kilometers. The district, once part of old Bastar, has a population of around 7.50 lakhs (Census 2011), with about 90 percent living in rural areas. More than 55 percent of the total population comprises Scheduled Tribes, mostly residing in rural areas and depending on forest produce for their livelihood. Scheduled Castes make up around 4 percent of the population (Census 2011). Kanker is 140 km from Raipur and 160 km from Jagdalpur, reachable by roads as there is no railway connectivity. Kanker district is divided into seven tehsils with a total of 1004 villages. The climate is of the monsoon type, with May being the hottest month and December the coolest. The average rainfall is 1492 mm, mainly from June to October, leading to shifts between dry and wet climates.

In terms of demographics, males constitute 51 percent of the population, and females make up 49 percent. The literacy rate is 77 percent, higher than the national average, with male literacy at 83 percent and female literacy at 71 percent. About 12 percent of the population in Kanker is below 23 years old. The sex ratio is 1007 females for every 1000 males, and the literacy rate is 70 percent. (Census 2011)

The project covers 12 villages within a 25 km radius from the block. In this area, the community faces challenges in accessing better market opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Despite the proximity to the district headquarters, people struggle due to a lack of technology, better management practices, and knowledge and skills. The unique characteristics of the area, like

**Figure 5: Project District of Selected Villages**



specific products and limited accessibility, affect value chain analysis and development options. The degradation of the natural environment, especially the destruction of forests, has impacted the status of women. Overall, Kanker showcases a blend of diverse geography, population distribution, and cultural richness.

### 3.2 Selection of Thematic Interventions

To address the challenges in the project area, HDFC Bank CSR under HRDP interventions focused on creating sustainable livelihoods for 1000 families, offering enhanced opportunities in forest produce, livestock, and micro enterprises. The project aimed to establish women-centric institutions capable of managing various initiatives and leading interventions in the market. Another key objective was to boost the income of beneficiaries by 15-30 percent through different interventions. Additionally, Udyogini aimed at enhancing its capacity to design and manage Information Communication & Technological (ICT) enabled services related to business, finance, and social security. These initiatives were intended to scale up a diverse set of compatible natural resource, farm, and non-farm-based enterprises, contributing to the overall development of the project area. Through these focused objectives, Udyogini seeks to make a positive and sustainable impact on the lives of the community members, promoting economic growth and empowerment. Activities undertaken are as follows (see **Error! Reference source not found.2**).

**Table 2: Activities undertaken**

Activity Category	Activities	Output Indicators
Clean Energy	Installation of Solar Lights	Clean energy
Enterprise Promotions	Formation of WEG Custard apple pulp making training, Tamarind Processing Training, Custard apple processing unit Mushroom Spawn unit Lac processing Unit FPC Board Training Finance literacy training	Skill and Entrepreneurship Development
Agriculture Training and Service	Mushroom cultivation training Lac Cultivation Training Exposure Visit Brood Farm	Increase in productivity and income
Livestock Management	Goat Platform, Poultry night shelter, Breed Farm Camps	Increase in income

### 3.3 Project Implementation

A detailed feasibility study and baseline were carried out in all 12 project villages selected for HDFC's HRDP. A comprehensive value chain analysis for poultry and lac was conducted in these villages, involving FGDs and market research with women to explore lac and poultry farming processes, identifying market potentials for various products at the village level. In collaboration with the Village Development Committee (VDC), 100 solar lights were installed at different locations in the villages. Women Entrepreneurship Groups (WEGs) were established, focusing on marketing, purchasing, producer selection, training, meetings, and monitoring of field activities, all closely coordinated with Udyogini. Sixteen WEGs actively engaged in procuring, collecting, aggregating, and processing tamarind at the village level, while three WEGs participated in procuring, aggregating, sorting, and grading custard apples.

A custard apple processing unit was established, with the WEG contributing towards securing a single-phase electricity connection. Members of the WEG group received training in pulp production and processing, supported by Udyogini. Additionally, a tamarind processing unit was set up in Kapsi village, where WEG group members were instructed in the art of tamarind brick making and the production of tamarind cake within the unit. Brood farms (Kusum) were established in ten project villages with Udyogini's support. Required equipment, such as secateurs, pieces of gator, and Douli, were provided to farmers for lac cultivation activities in all 12 villages. A total of 637 farmers benefited, selling lac, brood, scrap, *phunki*, etc., totalling approximately 13 lakhs during this period. A WEG group, Shree Sai Nath Mahila Udyam Samuh – Sureli, was established, and all lac processing machines were placed and installed, enabling lac processing by the WEG group in the village.

A spawn unit was established by one of the WEGs, procuring raw materials for mushroom cultivation. This created a new opportunity for producers cultivating mushrooms in their households, serving as a secondary source of income. Demand for mushroom cultivation increased among producers in the villages. A total of 386 producers were mobilized and selected for mushroom cultivation in their respective households.

Breed farms for poultry rearing were constructed in ten project villages, simplifying the maintenance, counting, monitoring, and availability of chicks. Training sessions on poultry and breed farm management were conducted for producers. Electricity connections were installed in each breed farm to enhance chick management practices and protect them from wild animals. A total of 500 individual night shelters were constructed, benefiting farmers who received training on shed management, feed management, chick's management, and health care management. During those period, 50 producers constructed 50 goat platforms in 3 villages, providing protection against various diseases, increasing herd size, and reducing goat mortality.

A full-fledged FPC was established during the project tenure. Training was provided to the Board of Directors (BODs) and staff for better FPC functions, concept seeding, and importance. FPC members were empowered for independent functioning and increased business volume, understanding their roles, responsibilities, duties of BOD, directors, shareholders, steps, and functions. Processes for fund linkages with financial institutions and line departments were explained, making the BODs aware of their roles and responsibilities in the FPC management. All necessary licenses for different processing units (Lac, Custard apple, Tamarind, and Mushroom) were obtained, enabling the FPC to collect, procure, and market any produce from the community.

### **3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

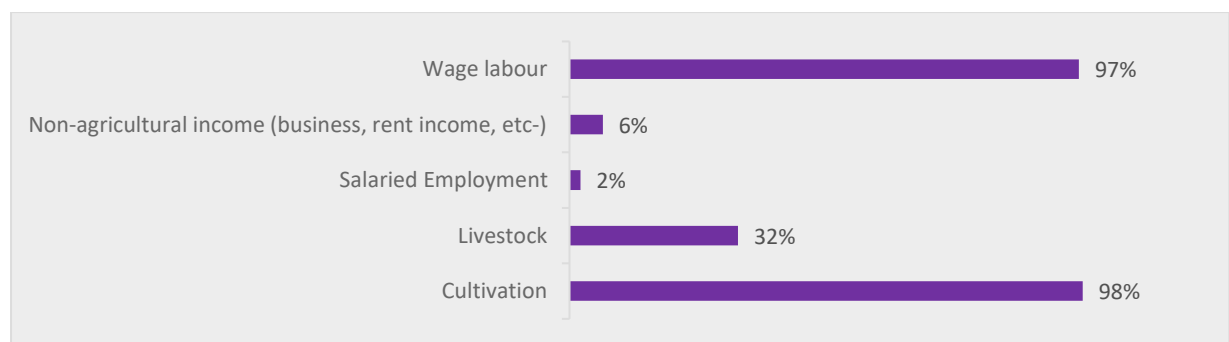
The HRDP follows a standard monitoring and evaluation approach, which the implementing partners have adopted. They report the progress of project implementation periodically to HDFC Bank. The HDFC Bank's programme implementation team visits the project villages regularly to review work sites, participate in training programmes and awareness camps, and engage with project beneficiaries. HDFC Bank has specific requirements for project information from the implementing partner. The implementing partner manages project data primarily in spreadsheets, detailing village-wise activities, beneficiaries associated with each project activity, and expenditures. Additionally, the implementing partner submits an annual progress report to HDFC Bank, including plans for the next year. This report is a key source of information summarising implemented activities, delivered outputs, and achieved outcomes.

Furthermore, HDFC Bank has enlisted Intellectap as an external agency to conduct an impact assessment of the project after one year of completion. This independent assessment evaluates using four criteria: relevance and convergence, impact and effectiveness, sustainability, and replicability.

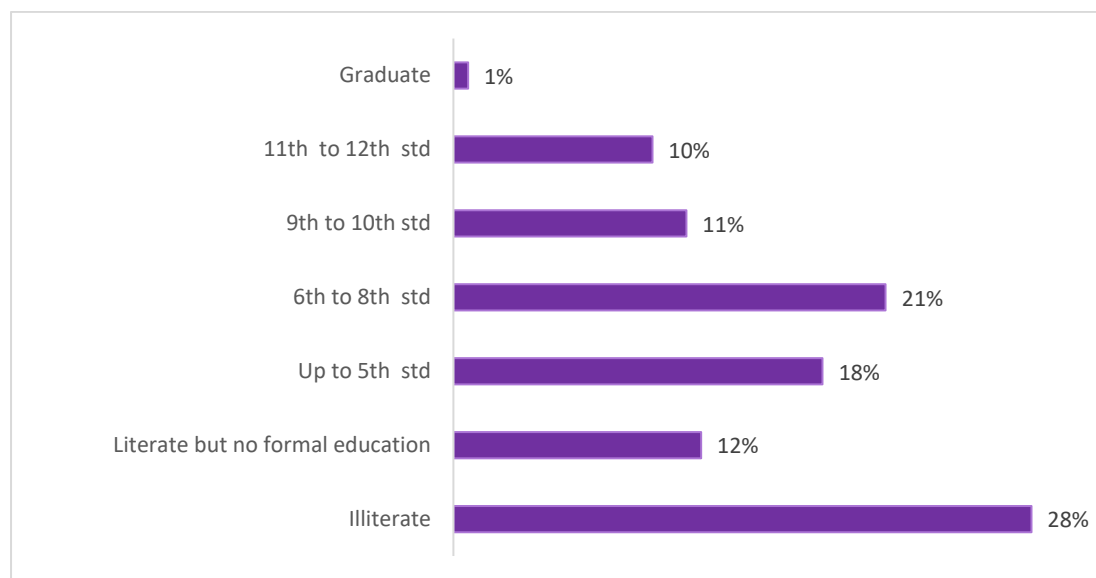
## 4 Study Findings

In the sampled project villages, the principal sources of household income are derived from agricultural activities, with 98 percent of households depending on farming. Livestock rearing contributes to the income of 32 percent of households, thereby indicating a degree of diversification in income sources. Salaried employment plays a minor role, constituting merely 2 percent of household income. Non-agricultural sources, such as earnings from business ventures or rental income, account for the income of 6 percent of households. Wage labour emerges as a significant source of income, with 97 percent of households reliant on earnings accrued through labour. Overall, the community predominantly depends on agriculture-related activities, highlighting the pivotal role of the cultivation sector in sustaining household incomes.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Sample Based on their Occupation (N=427)**

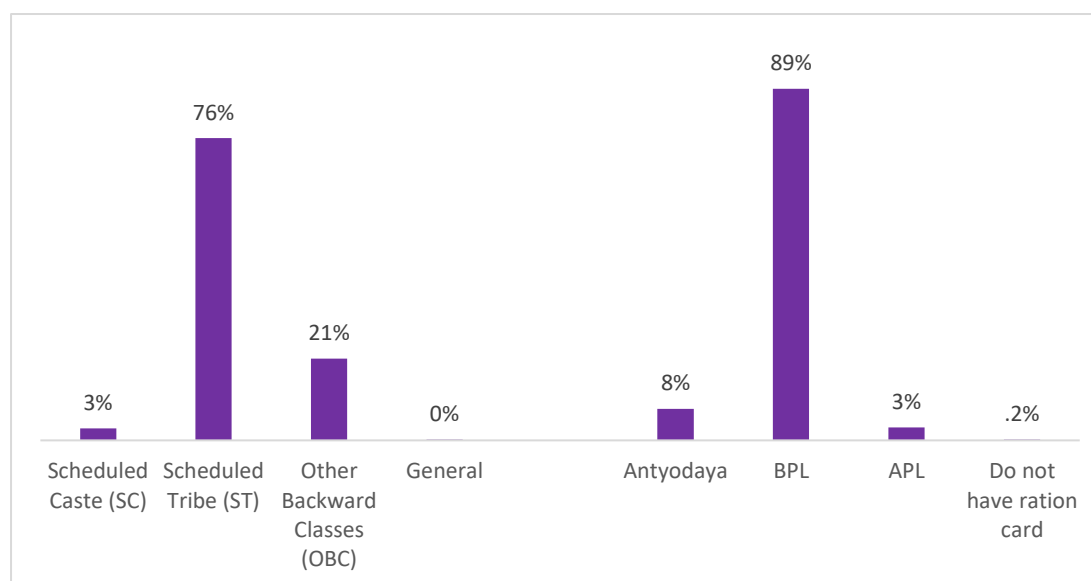


**Figure 7: Educational Qualification-wise Distribution of Sample (N=427)**





**Figure 8: Caste and Income Categorisation of Sample (N=427)**



While the above analysis represents the nature and status of the sample, the following table represents the summary and quantum of activities carried out (see Table 3)

**Table 3: Quantum of Activities under each Activity Category**

Activity Category	Activities	Nos. (as provided by IA)
Clean Energy	Solar Lights (Street)	100
Enterprises Promotion	Formation of WEG	24
	Custard apple pulp making training	10
	Tamarind processing training	10
	No of custard apple processing unit	1
	No of tamarind processing unit	1
	No of spawn unit	1
	No of lac processing Unit	1
	FPC Board Training	4
Agriculture Training and Services	Finance literacy training	20
	Mushroom cultivation training	8
	Lac cultivation training	27
	Exposure visit	2
Livestock Management	Brood farm	10
	No of poultry night shelter with training	500
	No of breed farm with training	10
	No of goat platform made	50

*(Source: Project MIS, Udyogini)*

The following sub-sections provide details on the findings for each activity implemented in the project villages.

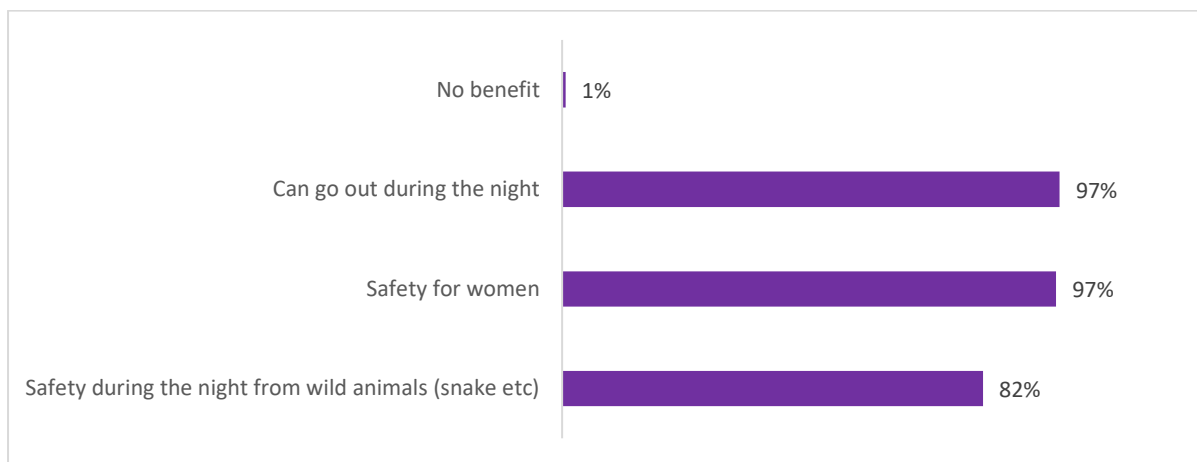
#### **4.1.1 Use of Clean Energy Solutions**

The deployment of 100 solar street lights across the 12 villages within the project area has proven to be a transformative initiative, extending far beyond providing illumination. A quantitative analysis of the project's impact reveals that these solar lights play a crucial role in ensuring night time safety, particularly against threats from wild animals like snakes, a concern expressed by 82 percent of respondents. This underscores the immediate and tangible benefits these solar

installations bring to the communities. Notably, 97 percent of respondents acknowledge the positive impact of solar street lights in creating a secure environment for women during the night. The lights not only address safety concerns but also empower the community, as an equal percentage of respondents appreciate the newfound freedom to move around at night without fear. This signifies a significant shift in the safety and mobility within these villages.

The reported minimal perception of no benefit, indicated by only 1 percent of respondents, is an acknowledgment of the positive impact of these solar light installations in the project villages. In the larger context of electricity challenges in the region, where a consistent grid is often available, these solar street lights emerge not merely as a practical solution but as a transformative force, positively influencing daily life.

**Figure 9: Benefits of Solar Street Lights (N=426)**



With 63.6 percent of households having solar street light installations near their homes, the eco-friendly solutions have become an integral part of the community. A 66 percent operational status of these lights marks a positive shift, especially in a region where regular electricity is often scarce. It's essential to note that the responsibility for repairing non-operational (34 percent) lights should be taken up by the VDC, ensuring the sustained functionality of these crucial installations.

**Figure 10: A Solar Light Installed in Project Village**



The impact of the solar street lights in these villages is significant, addressing safety concerns and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. Beyond serving as sources of light, these solar installations symbolise progress, safety, and a promising future for the 12 villages. The data collected not only showcases the success of the initiative but also emphasises the need to continue and expand such projects for the betterment of rural communities.

#### 4.1.2 Enterprise Promotion

When the project commenced, the Udyogini team formed VDCs in 12 villages, voluntary associations of villagers for local administration. They acted as extrajudicial authorities, contributing to the collective organisation in the village. The primary functions of the VDC included resolving existing problems by making necessary decisions and, at times, acquiring

external resources to address village issues. With the assistance of the VDC, meetings were organised for the SHG members, where the concept, roles, responsibilities, and benefits of Women Enterprise Groups (WEG) were explained. Additionally, HDFC Bank's support to the existing groups was highlighted, leading members to join the WEG.

Subsequently, WEGs were formed, and the groups opened bank accounts. Weekly meetings were conducted to plan their activities, such as procuring and processing raw materials, deciding on sales strategies, and distributing profits among the involved members. Beneficiary selection was facilitated with input from the VDC, and to streamline the process in an enterprise model, 24 WEGs were established, with two in each village. The primary objective was to instill an entrepreneurial spirit among the members.

After proper formation and training, the well-trained WEGs actively participated in imparting training to individual farmers, generating demand, and closely coordinating with Udyogini to monitor field activities. Later, a decision was made that each WEG could lead different ventures, such as Tamarind, Custard apple, and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP). Among the 24 WEGs, 10 brood farms (Kusum) were established in 10 project villages with the support of the implementing partner and HDFC.

During that time, the harvested brood lac, *phunki*, etc., were sold in the market, with each WEG earning an amount ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000. The surplus brood lac was provided to other producers in the village who lacked sufficient brood. The profits earned were distributed among the WEG members, and some funds were retained in their bank account.

Similarly, 16 WEGs focused on procuring tamarind. Each WEG was provided with tarpaulins and weighing machines to market the product in the village. Throughout the period, these WEGs were engaged in procuring, collecting, aggregating, and processing tamarind at the village level. The WEG members sold approximately Rs 1,600,000 worth of tamarind, including *resha* and tamarind seeds, in the market. The WEGs earned a total net profit of Rs 1,72,000 from this enterprise. They partnered with the NGO *Bastar se Bazaar Tak* to sell their product. Some WEGs also marketed their product in the nearest market, which was 50 km away from them. This helped minimize the involvement of middlemen (*kuchia*) and ensured a reasonably good price for their product.

Initially, individual farmers used to sell their custard apple produce to middlemen at a lower price due to their limited production and the distance to the market. Observing this, three WEGs expressed interest in entering this business. With the assistance of Udyogini, market linkages were established with *Bastar se Bazaar Tak*, an NGO that empowers tribal women and farmers to market their local produce in cities generating income and livelihood. Collection centres were set up near the villages, and the WEGs actively participated in procuring custard apple. Following procurement, aggregation, sorting, and grading were carried out by the members in the villages. The NGO would then collect the product from their office as part of the market linkage support. Approximately 1700 kg of custard apple was sourced from 88 individual farmers, generating an income of Rs 11,000 for the group. The WEG earned a profit of Rs 5,500 from this enterprise. This approach allowed farmers to sell their produce locally, while the WEGs sold to the NGO from their office, reducing the role of middlemen operating there.

The WEGs group consisted of at least 10 members and up to 25 members, facing various challenges in their day-to-day operations. The main hurdles included a lack of market access, which accounted for 38 percent, limited financial resources at 42 percent, and a skill gap, representing 21 percent of the challenges. These obstacles could significantly affect the group's

ability to run their business effectively and sustainably. Then, training and support from HDFC Bank were introduced to the WEG for their project. The most significant support came in establishing linkages with banks, with 87 percent of respondents reporting such assistance. This showed a strong focus on financial access and resources. Additionally, 35 percent of respondents reported linkages with firms, indicating opportunities for collaboration and support from external businesses. Initial capital investment was reported by 28 percent of respondents, highlighting the importance of financial support in starting the project. Half of the respondents, accounting for 50 percent, indicated support in establishing the enterprise group, emphasizing the importance of working together. Furthermore, 33 percent of respondents received training for business management, which was crucial for developing necessary skills. Marketing support was reported by 30 percent of respondents, showing efforts to promote products and services. Lastly, 25 percent of respondents received information regarding production techniques and practices, stressing the importance of sharing knowledge to improve productivity.

**Figure 11: Project Support Received by the Beneficiaries (N=260)**

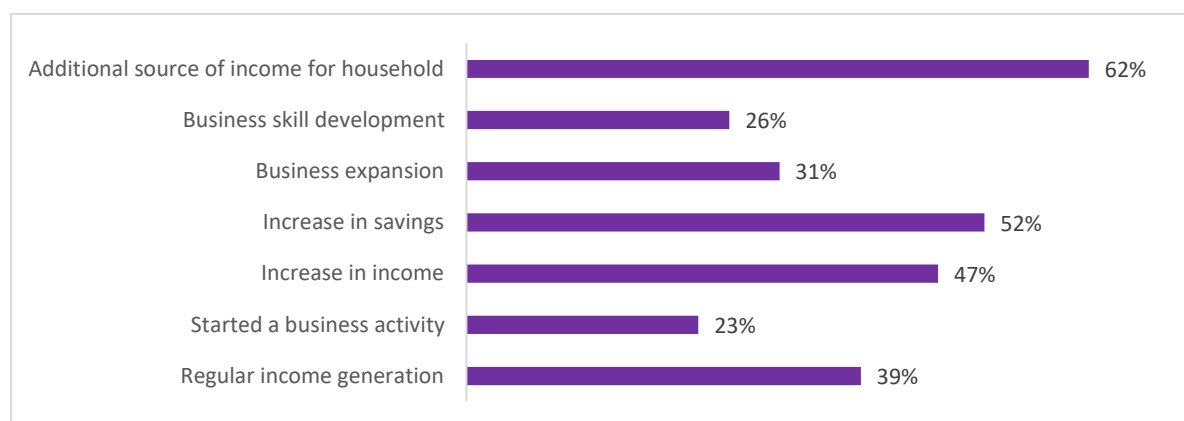


After overcoming these challenges, **there was a significant improvement in the group members' monthly income, rising from Rs 300 per month to Rs 500 per month.** This suggests that despite the obstacles, the enterprise group made progress in addressing some of these challenges, leading to a better financial situation. This initiative showcases the positive impact of forming WEGs and implementing enterprise models.

### Perceived benefits

The responses from the respondents indicated various benefits gained through project support in the enterprise development. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents reported that they were able to generate a steady income through their business activities, which was essential for financial stability. Twenty-three percent of the respondents began their own business ventures, indicating an increase in entrepreneurial initiatives within the community. Forty-seven percent of the respondents experienced growth in their income, demonstrating the positive impact of the project on their financial well-being. Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported an increase in their savings, suggesting improved financial management practices and greater financial security. Thirty-one percent of the respondents were able to expand their businesses, indicating growth and sustainability in their entrepreneurial endeavours. Twenty-six percent of the respondents acquired new business skills, which were essential for effective management and growth of their enterprises. A significant 62 percent of the respondents stated that their business activities provided an additional source of income for their households, contributing to overall household welfare and stability.

**Figure 12: Perceived Benefits Received from the Enterprise Promotion (N=260)**



Overall, these findings highlighted the positive outcomes of the project support in enterprise development, including increased income, savings, business expansion, and skill development, ultimately benefiting the respondents and their households.

### **4.1.3 Enterprise in the Form of Processing Unit set up by WEG**

The collaboration between Udyogini, HDFC, and WEGs serves as a successful model for empowering rural communities. To boost value addition, professionalism, and entrepreneurial skills, four processing units were established within distinct WEGs. The project highlights a clear demand for basic business management skills among women in the survival economy. Many rural women, eager to enhance income, are keen on learning essential skills in product selection, production, and marketing for increased household income. The project's impact is notable, particularly at very low-income levels, where development inputs can lead to significant relative change.

#### **4.1.3.1 Lac Processing Unit**

In the village of Sureli, the Shree Sai Nath Mahila Udyam Samuh, with active support from the Panchayat, spearheaded the effort to secure a building for installing lac processing machines. The Panchayat permanently handed over the building to the WEG group, consisting of 15 members who contributed approximately Rs 70,000. The majority of this amount, around Rs. 68,000, was used to set up a three-phase electricity connection for the processing unit. Initially, Udyogini, with support from HDFC Parivartan CSR, provided machines and equipment worth approximately Rs 4 lakhs to establish the unit in the village.

Before the project, community members were unfamiliar with seed lac processing, as they were solely engaged in traditional lac cultivation methods. The project educated the WEG on effectively managing and operating the processing unit, covering aspects like management, market understanding, and pricing strategies. A trip to Jharkhand was organized for the WEG to observe lac processing in another unit run by a Samiti. Additionally, the project introduced farmers to the Package on Scientific Lac Cultivation (PSCL) method, enhancing lac production and ensuring a sufficient supply for the processing unit's operations. To kickstart operations, the group obtained a loan of approximately Rs 10 lakhs from the FPC in two phases. With determination and hard work, they procured and processed lac, achieving break-even in the first year and successfully repaying the borrowed funds to the FPC. This repayment signifies the responsible and sustainable approach embraced by the Shree Sai Nath Mahila Udyam Samuh. Their journey, marked by



significant milestones and challenges, reflects the power of determination and serves as inspiration for aspiring entrepreneurs in their community.

#### 4.1.3.2 Tamarind Processing Unit

In Kapsi village, Udyogini and HDFC Bank took another initiative by forming a new WEG with interested farmers, exclusively dedicated to the Tamarind Processing Unit. This unit aimed to utilize the abundant raw materials available in the area and support the existing WEG involved in manual tamarind processing. The total cost of the Tamarind unit was 6.5 lakhs, with HDFC Bank providing full support for machinery costs amounting to approximately 6 lakhs. Each WEG member contributed 3000 rupees, and a total of 35000 rupees was collected for electricity connection and building maintenance, provided by the Gram Panchayat.

**Figure 13: A Setup of Tamarind Processing Unit**



Members actively participated in training for managing the tamarind processing unit and brick making, gaining practical experience in the process. Equipped with machinery from HDFC Bank, the unit began procuring and processing tamarind. Eleven members were employed through this initiative, procuring raw materials from farmers and processing them at the collection centre. The plan was to distribute profits from the tamarind processing unit among members once operations commenced. However, the venture faced challenges due to occasional machine failures, resulting in a lack of profitability. Despite these setbacks, the group's resilience was evident. They decided to restart operations after repairing the machinery, demonstrating their commitment to overcoming challenges for long-term success.

#### 4.1.3.3 Custard Apple Processing Unit

In the village of Domahara, the Nari Shakti Mahila Samuh has embarked on a notable journey by establishing a custard apple processing unit, proving to be a success story. Located in Kanker Block, the Nari Sakti Mahila Udyog Samiti has effectively set up this unit, showcasing a significant entrepreneurial initiative. The WEG underwent specialised training in pulp making, a crucial skill

**Figure 14: Custard Apple Processing Unit**



for this specific activity. Essential machinery support for the unit was provided by HDFC Bank. In its inaugural year, the group procured custard apples from local farmers, initiating pulp making and achieving a turnover of Rs 43,000. They earned a profit of Rs 16,000. Bolstered by this success, in the following year, the WEG secured a loan of Rs 60,000 from the FPC to reinvest in the enterprise. They utilized the funds to restart pulp production, creating a ready-to-sell

product. This year, they anticipate a profit of Rs 75,000, showcasing consistent growth.

The success tale of this custard apple processing unit illustrates the positive impact of empowering women through skill training and financial support. The strategic decision to reinvest profits and seek additional funding has facilitated the expansion and diversification of activities. Notably, the unit not only achieved financial sustainability but also contributed to the economic development of the community.

This success story is not devoid of challenges. They encountered pricing challenges from the middleman (*kuchia*) and faced market awareness issues regarding where to sell the product. Transportation problems further added to the difficulties in reaching the market. Currently selling their product to the NGO "*Bastar se Bazaar Tak*" at comparatively lower prices, they are now exploring markets where they can get the best value for their product.

Looking ahead, the WEG harbours ambitious plans for the upcoming year. Leveraging existing machinery and skilled manpower, they aspire to venture into producing mango pulp and jamun pulp. This forward-thinking approach reflects the group's commitment to optimizing resources and exploring new avenues for growth.

**Figure 15: WEG of Custard Apple Processing Unit**



#### 4.1.3.4 Mushroom Spawn Unit

Aturgaon, a small village in the Kanker district of Chhattisgarh, witnessed a positive transformation due to the Mushroom Spawn Production WEG. Comprising 10 members from various SHGs, this group embarked on a mission to cultivate mushrooms and establish a lasting business.

**Figure 16: Setup of Spawn Making Unit**



The unit started with 10 members, three to four of them actively engaged in producing mushroom spawn after the initial months. HDFC provided crucial support, including machines like Laminar, BOD, and Autoclave, along with tools such as big *ganji*, lids, spoons, whiteboards, and rakes, totalling Rs. 2.5 lakhs. However, acquiring electricity posed a challenge, and the WEG members had to collect Rs. 11,000 on their own and apply for a connection to the electricity office.

Renting a Panchayat building for five years, the WEG invested significant effort into cleaning it up. Despite initial challenges, the women persevered, transforming the building into a bustling centre for mushroom spawn production. In the first year, they earned a profit of Rs. 6,000, which increased to Rs. 15,000 in the second year and an impressive Rs. 35,000 in the third year, totalling a profit of Rs. 56,000.

Their reach expanded as they sold mushroom spawn in 35 villages, up from 23 the previous year. Customers increased from 200 to 350 farmers, and the involvement of WEG members' sisters in mushroom production added to the enterprise's success. Currently, the WEG produces mushroom spawn based on demand, supported by Udyogini and other project initiatives, obtaining master spawns and chemicals from Raipur.

The journey faced challenges, including finding the building, obtaining electricity, and addressing technical issues. The Panchayat resolved the building issue, persistent efforts secured electricity, and technical flaws were fixed with guidance from Krishi Vigyan Kendra. Challenges in the second year included slow sales and limited reach, prompting a focus on expansion and promotion. Maintaining equipment was challenging due to power fluctuations, leading the WEG to consider setting up a solar power system with support from partners and the government.

To ensure the longevity of the Mushroom Spawn Enterprise, the WEG recognises the importance of promoting mushroom farming in nearby villages. Current demand comes irregularly, mainly through orders from partners or Krishi Vigyan Kendra.



The Mushroom Spawn Production WEG in Aturgaon shows the impactful efforts of women in rural areas. Despite challenges, their perseverance, community involvement, and strategic partnerships have not only transformed their lives but also inspired others. As they continue to overcome obstacles, the WEG serves as an example for those aspiring to start their own businesses.

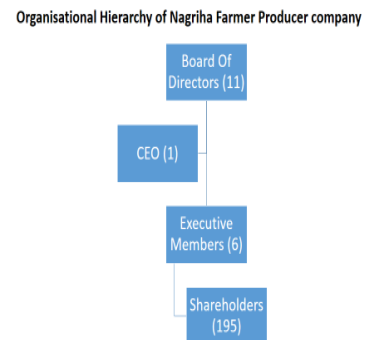
These initiatives share a core theme focusing on holistic rural empowerment through teamwork, skill development, and financial support. The collaboration between Udyogini, HDFC, and WEGs highlights their joint efforts to bring positive changes to the social and economic aspects of the villages. The establishment of processing units not only adds value to local produce but also encourages WEG members to adopt a professional and entrepreneurial mindset.

#### **4.1.4 Nagriha Farmer Producer Company**

In the agricultural sector of Kanker block, an initiative has taken root through the establishment of Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited. Prior to this intervention, local farmers faced a significant challenge as they individually sold their produce to local traders or middlemen (*kuchia*), leading to a substantial reduction of 30 percent-35 percent in earnings compared to the open market value. This decline in returns was attributed to web of intermediaries through which the produce travelled, ultimately diminishing the price realisation for the hardworking farmers. Additionally, the absence of processing, such as grading, sorting, or packaging, further deprived the farmers of an additional 40-50 percent in potential earnings and reduced the shelf life of their produce by 50-60 percent.

In response to these challenges, Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited was established in the year 2021 with a board of 11 directors, each contributing Rs 10,000 as their share capital. Udyogini, recognizing the potential impact of collective efforts, conducted a shareholder connection drive across 12 project villages, successfully connecting with over 200 farmers and raising Rs 1 lakhs. Further fortifying this initiative, HDFC contributed an additional Rs 10 lakhs to the Farmer Producer Company (FPC).

**Figure 18: Organisational Hierarchy of FPC**



The primary objective of Nagriha FPC is to establish an effective institutional mechanism for managing the supply chain of agricultural produce and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). This strategic approach aims to ensure better income for the producers through collective marketing and the promotion of processed products. Udyogini played a pivotal role by imparting crucial training on business plan preparation and equipping the board members with technical skills essential for the smooth operation of the FPC.

To facilitate the overall operation and business development activities, a dedicated Executive Member was formed, receiving regular training sessions to enhance their capabilities. The FPC recognising the importance of financial support for processing units, extends loans to these units, enabling the establishment of collection centres in each project village for the aggregation of NTFP based produce. Subsequently, these produce items undergo processing in various units, and the FPC collectively markets the finished products, thereby earning profits that can be reinvested into other commodities.

In a strategic move to enhance branding and marketing effectiveness, Nagriha FPC obtained an FSSAI license. The intention was to consolidate various processing units under one umbrella - Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited, ensuring that farmers can maximize the benefits derived from this concerted effort.

Though the FPC had good intentions, it faced some tough challenges along the way. Unlike earlier interventions in Kanker that focused only on helping women farmers, the FPC wanted both men and women to be part of its management. At first, things looked promising. They did a great job promoting the organisation and working well with processing units. These units were really enthusiastic and soon became self-sufficient, making profits too. They shared these profits among members and used some to make the enterprise even better.

But then, trouble struck. There was a big problem with leadership because of issues related to gender. This caused a lot of problems within the FPC, and communication broke down between the FPC, its board, processing units, and the market. Finally, the male leaders had to step down because things were getting too difficult.

To deal with these problems, everyone started working together to fix things. The FPC started thinking hard about what went wrong and how to make things better. They all wanted to rebuild the connections that used to make everything run smoothly. Everyone was determined to work together. They were sure that with time, the FPC would become stronger and be able to keep helping farmers and promoting sustainable farming.



## 4.2 Skill Training and Livelihood Enhancement

### 4.2.1 Access to Training and Services

The lac farmers in the area have significantly benefited from the training programmes, transitioning from traditional farming methods to PSCL (Package of Scientific Lac Cultivation) approach with the intervention of HDFC Bank and Udyogini. Various training sessions were organised for the lac farmers, focusing on modern and scientific techniques. The WEG played a crucial role in disseminating the training to individual farmers. Essential equipment such as secateurs, pieces of gator, and Douli were provided to the farmers in all 12 villages for activities like inoculation, harvesting, and pesticide and insecticide spraying in lac cultivation. The WEG facilitated the collection of requirements from farmers, ensuring they obtained the necessary tools.

Market-oriented training was also a part of the programme, updating farmers on market prices and establishing market linkages. **This knowledge proved beneficial, enabling more than 635 farmers to earn approximately Rs. 65 lakhs from the sales of lac produce.**

In a parallel effort, over 280 producers were mobilised and selected for mushroom cultivation. Through eight training sessions conducted by external trainers in the presence of Udyogini field staff, these producers gained insights into effective mushroom cultivation practices. This initiative aimed at empowering individual households, enhancing their skills in mushroom cultivation. The impact of these interventions is notable, indicating a positive shift towards modern and scientific agricultural practices among the local farming community.

### Perceived Benefits

The majority of farmers have noticed positive transformations in their agricultural outcomes, with improvements in income, productivity, and cost-effectiveness. A significant 63 percent of farmers mentioned an increase in income, showcasing the positive impact of adopted practices on their financial returns. Additionally, a substantial 59 percent observed heightened productivity, indicating that changes in farming methods led to better yields. Almost half of the respondents, 46 percent, shared a decrease in input costs, suggesting that the adopted interventions made farming more budget-friendly, potentially reducing expenses on items like seeds and fertilisers. Notably, 41 percent reported better pest management, showcasing the effectiveness of the practices in controlling harmful pests crucial for crop health. A significant 37 percent experienced reduced crop loss, suggesting that the implemented changes contributed to more successful harvests and minimised damage to crops. Nearly half of the respondents, 47 percent, noted that farming has become easier, indicating that the interventions simplified farming processes, making them more convenient and manageable. In summary, the positive changes reported by farmers encompass enhanced financial returns, increased productivity, cost-effectiveness, improved pest management, reduced crop loss, and easier farming processes, collectively illustrating the beneficial impact of the adopted interventions on their agricultural practices.



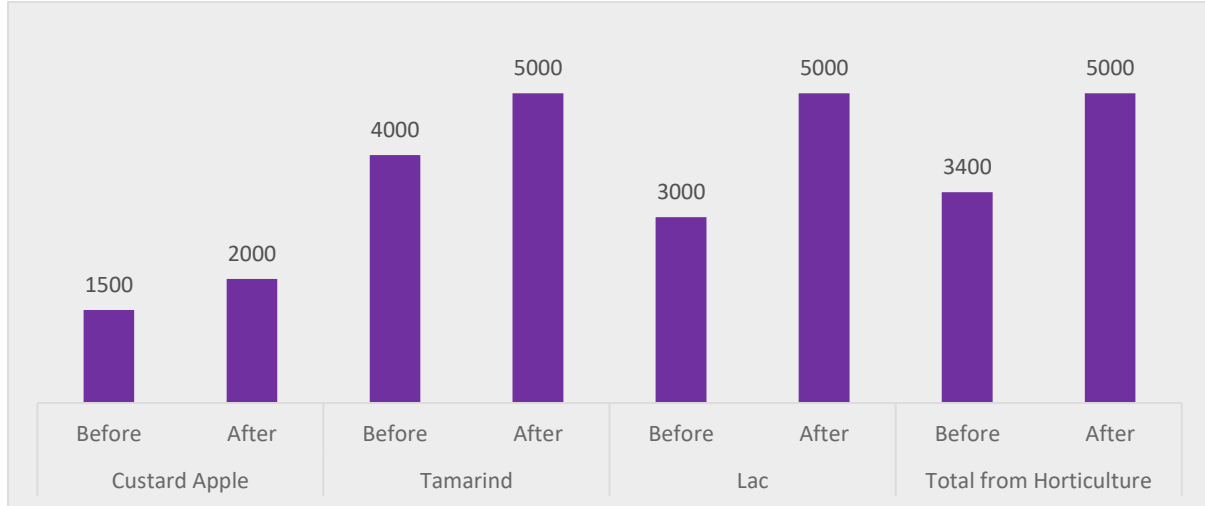
**Figure 19: Perceived benefits due to agricultural training and services (N=98)**



### Income from Cultivation

The income comparison before and after adopting intervention in cultivation reveals a positive shift in financial outcomes. Prior to embracing scientific cultivation practices, the annual income from horticulture (lac, custard apple and tamarind) was Rs. 3400, reflecting the economic conditions of that period. However, with the implementation of new practices, the annual income has significantly risen to Rs. 5000, marking a substantial 47% increase. This upward trajectory underscores the economic benefits derived from engaging in scientific agricultural activities. The enhanced income can be attributed to various factors facilitated by the PSLC, including improved farming techniques resulting in higher and better-quality yields.

**Figure 20: Change in Income (Rs.) (N=96<sup>2</sup>)**



<sup>2</sup> There were some overlaps between the farmers. N(Lac) = 60; N(Tamarind)=20; N(Custard Apple)=26

## 4.2.2 Case study

### Empowering Rural Resilience: Pramila Sahoo's Journey from Adversity to Prosperity

Pramila Sahoo, a resident of Govardhan village in Kanker district, faced challenging circumstances when she and her husband, both wage labourers at a brick factory 80 km away, had an annual income of around 1 lakh rupees. Living in tight conditions, their situation worsened when her husband suffered a severe leg injury in an accident, rendering him unable to work. Struggling for survival, they returned to their village, where Pramila learned about the HDFC project.



Becoming a project beneficiary, she underwent training in lac cultivation, seizing the opportunity to change her situation. Fortunately, the lac cultivation season proved highly successful, enabling her to earn more than 1.5 lakh rupees. Additionally, during the remaining

time, she engaged in paddy cultivation, selling the produce for over Rs. 80,000 per year. Taking advantage of the poultry night shelter benefits, she ventured into poultry farming, yielding an income of Rs. 4 to 5 thousand annually. Importantly, her children are now attending school in their village, reflecting an improved family situation.

Pramila's transformative journey showcases the impact of the HDFC project in empowering rural individuals. From the depths of adversity, she emerged as a confident woman, skillfully navigating challenges through diversified income sources. The integration of lac and paddy cultivation, along with poultry farming, not only enhanced her financial well-being but also contributed to the overall economic development of her family and the community. This success story illustrates how targeted interventions and skill-building initiatives can uplift families, providing them with sustainable livelihood options and a more promising future.



### 4.2.3 Improved Capacity to Generate Income Through Livestock Management

In a concerted effort, a total of 500 individual night shelters have been meticulously constructed, utilising a contributory system. HDFC played a pivotal role by providing essential materials like sheets, *jaal*, supporting rods, and labour payments, while farmers contributed bricks and cement. The farmers, in turn, have not only benefited from this initiative but also received comprehensive training in shed management, feed management, chick

Figure 21: A Night Shelter of Poultry



management, and healthcare management. Individual farmers have taken the initiative to contribute to the deworming and vaccination of poultry in their respective villages. Additionally, they have embarked on the establishment of azolla cultivation, a practice aimed at enhancing poultry feed management.

Figure 22: A Breed Farm in a Project Village

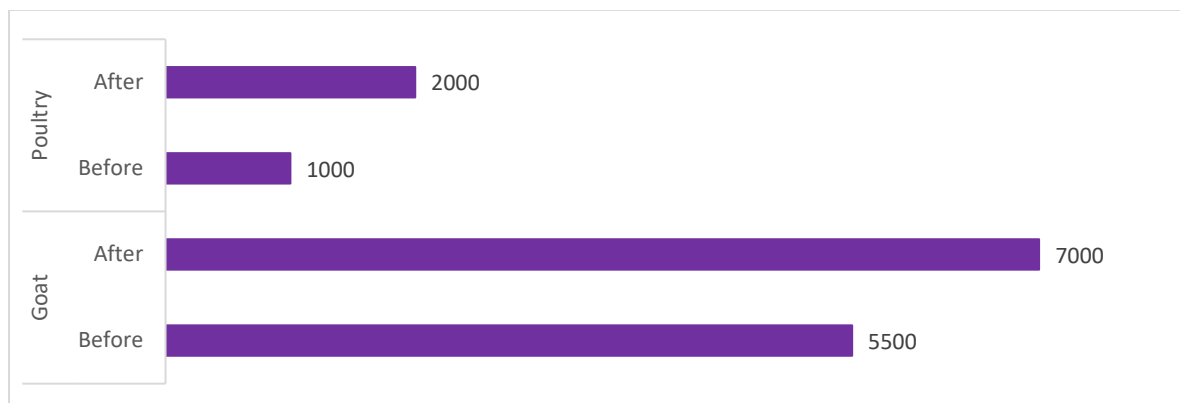


Simultaneously, ten breed farms for poultry farmers have been established in ten project villages, again following a contributory system. This organised approach has streamlined the keeping, counting, and health monitoring of birds and chicks in breed farms, facilitating more efficient management practices. Producers have undergone 20 basic training sessions on poultry and breed farm management to enhance their skills. To ensure better chick management practices, each breed farm is

equipped with electricity connections, safeguarding the birds from potential threats posed by wild animals.

During this period, a total of 50 goat platforms were also constructed across three villages, providing producers with a means to protect goats from various diseases and ultimately leading to an increase in herd size and a decrease in goat mortality. Producers received on-field training in goat management to further enhance their capabilities in this domain. This comprehensive approach underscores the positive impact of these initiatives on poultry and goat farming, contributing to the overall improvement of livestock management practices in the project villages.

**Figure 23: Change in Average Monthly Income due to Improved Livestock Rearing (N=197)**



The improvement in the approximate annual income from livestock, specifically goats and poultry, comparing the before and after scenarios. Before the intervention, the **annual income from goats stood at Rs. 5500, which experienced a positive shift to Rs. 7000 after the intervention. This signifies an increase of Rs. 1500 in the annual income from goat rearing.**

Similarly, in the case of poultry, the before-intervention annual is doubled after the intervention. This increase of Rs. 1000 per poultry unit indicates the income generated from poultry farming.

The overall analysis highlights the effectiveness of the intervention measures in enhancing the annual income from both goats and poultry. This positive change is likely attributed to various factors such as improved management practices, better healthcare, and increased productivity in terms of livestock numbers.

The increase in income is crucial for the farmers as it reflects improved livelihoods and economic stability. It suggests that the interventions, whether related to breeding practices, healthcare measures, or other aspects of livestock management, have positively influenced the economic outcomes for the farmers involved.



#### 4.2.4 Case Study

### Empowering Rural Entrepreneurs: Laleswari Netam's Tale of Breed Farm Triumph

Laleswari Netam ji a resident of Aturgaon village of Kanker District, has become a success story due to the thoughtful efforts made in breed farming. Initially involved in traditional farming, cultivating paddy and lac, her life took a positive turn when the HDFC Programme reached her



village. Recognised as a beneficiary for lac cultivation, she opted for the Package of Scientific Lac Cultivation (PSLC) Programme. Despite having very few kusum trees, she managed to earn extra income. Later, she got involved in the Breed Farm scheme, an initiative where she invested Rs. 40,000, and HDFC bank supported her with Rs. 90,000 for breed farm manufacturing costs. In the first year, she made a profit of Rs. 70,000. Using part of this profit, she invested Rs. 30,000 in a bore well for vegetable cultivation. This vegetable farm not only met her household nutrition security needs but also provided extra income when surplus produce was sold in the market.

Encouraged by her success, Laleswari ventured into Sunali and Kadaknath breeds, making substantial profits. After recognising the benefits of poultry breeding, she expanded into goat rearing with support from HDFC, with the construction of a Goat Platform. This diversification significantly boosted her overall earnings. Simultaneously, Laleswari's active involvement in community initiatives led to her selection in the WEG of the village. Here, she played a crucial role in establishing a self-sufficient Spawn Making unit, with support from HDFC and Udyogini. Additionally, she initiated mushroom farming as an individual farmer, generating extra income for her family.



With her entrepreneurial spirit, Laleswari Devi became a board member of the FPC, Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited. Her journey from a traditional farmer to a multifaceted entrepreneur and community leader highlights the positive impact of strategic interventions and financial support. Laleswari's success story not only demonstrates the transformative power of breed farm initiatives but also underscores the significance of community engagement and sustainable agricultural practices in rural development.

## 5 Analysis of Assessment Criteria

### 5.1 Relevance and Convergence

**Relevance:** The project in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh focused on enhancing livelihoods through the cultivation of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and horticulture products such as lac, mushroom and custard apple and not just conventional agricultural practices. At the same time, the focus on sustainable agricultural practices, as seen in the Semialata plantation initiative, aligned with the district's need for environmentally friendly approaches. Such practices contribute to long-term ecological balance and resource sustainability. Partnering with local institutions like KVK and the Forest Department demonstrated a collaborative and inclusive approach.

By introducing and supporting activities such as lac farming, mushroom cultivation, and poultry interventions, the project contributed to diversifying income streams for farmers. Lac cultivation is common in the area and aligns with the local ecology and environmental conditions as it leverages the natural habitat. Similarly, mushroom cultivation which utilises agricultural waste and poultry interventions complement traditional farming practices and provide an additional income stream. This diversification was essential for reducing dependency on a single crop or activity.

The project empowered local communities, especially farmers and women, by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in various income-generating activities. Training programs associated with lac farming, mushroom cultivation, and poultry interventions not only empowered farmers with diversified skills but also contributed to overall agricultural knowledge in the region. This empowerment is crucial in rural areas for building self-sufficiency. Initiatives like processing units and Women Entrepreneur Groups (WEG) not only generate income but also create employment opportunities. The focus on women was relevant as the state of Chhattisgarh boasts a very high labour participation rate of women (51.6% in 2021-22). By emphasizing specific product value chains like lac, poultry, goat, and high-value agricultural crops, the project adopts a value chain approach to equip women in these areas with essential skills and knowledge. This strategy aims to enhance their income and social status, ensuring a holistic impact on the community. This approach aligns with the project's broader goals of economic empowerment and social upliftment.

The project aligned with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction (SDG 1), food security and nutrition (SDG 2), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and life on land (SDG 15). By diversifying income streams through lac farming, mushroom cultivation, and poultry interventions, the project contributes to economic well-being, while initiatives like WEG address gender inequality. The focus on sustainable agriculture and partnerships with local institutions exemplify the commitment to SDGs, promoting inclusive development and environmental sustainability (SDG 17).

**Convergence:** Working together with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and the Forest Department in Kanker, a substantial 22,789 Semialata saplings were handed out to 17 farmers in the recent reporting period. These saplings were planted in 20 acres of land in 7 villages, contributing to the promotion of Semialata plantation and the overall enhancement of green cover. The Semialata trees play a vital role as they allow Kusum trees to rest for the next season, and also prove valuable



in lac production, with the brood lac used for inoculation on Kusum trees. To ensure the success of this initiative, farmers underwent training that covered various crucial aspects of Semialata cultivation. The training sessions were tailored to include essential topics such as nursery establishment, site selection, pit preparation, and efficient management of Semialata plants. This thorough training not only equipped farmers with necessary skills but also added to their earnings from the enterprise. This collaborative effort involving the HDFC project, KVK, and the Forest Department emphasises a convergent approach towards sustainable agricultural practices.

## 5.2 Sustainability

The HRDP aimed to enhance the economic resilience of a rural community by addressing poverty and vulnerabilities, providing comprehensive business, ecological, and social services for economic and social empowerment. Focused on the Kanker district, the project tried to uplift the incomes and living conditions of underprivileged families.

The project's sustainable impact is evident in the positive transformations it brought to the lives of farmers, particularly lac farmers, many of whom have become prosperous (with 635 farmers earning a total of around Rs. 65 lakhs from the sales of lac produce), justifying the saying "Lac se Lakhpati." The entrepreneurship facilitated through WEGs and processing units has instilled confidence among women. The rise in annual income from lac farming, mushroom cultivation, earnings from WEG activities, value-added processing units, goat rearing, and poultry interventions signifies a concrete improvement in farmers' financial well-being, enabling investments in education, healthcare, and other agricultural endeavours, acting as a safety net during challenging times.

Beyond financial benefits, the project's significance lies in empowering farmers through knowledge and skills. Training in lac cultivation, mushroom spawn production, pulp unit operation, tamarind processing, shed and livestock management contributes to creating a more knowledgeable and capable farming community. Farmers not only enjoy immediate benefits but also gain the skills to address challenges in the long term, fostering sustainable agricultural practices.

The project's importance extends beyond financial gains, marking a stride towards enhanced livelihoods, increased knowledge, and a more resilient farming community. The positive shifts observed in lac, mushroom, tamarind, custard, goat, and poultry income underscore the practical impact of the project on farmers' lives, contributing to their overall socio-economic development.

**Custard Apple Processing Unit:** The establishment and success of the Custard Apple Processing Unit by the Narishakti Mahila Udyam Samuh, in collaboration with Udyogini, Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited, and *Bastar se Bazar Tak*, contribute significantly to sustainability. By autonomously procuring raw custard apples, processing and marketing their produce (after passing a resolution), the group has created a self-sustaining economic model. They currently generate income through the sale of their produce and autonomously handle daily operational expenses. This financial independence and the technical training provided to the WEG group by Udyogini enhances the resilience of the group, ensuring continued operations and growth over the long term.

**Lac Processing Unit:** The seed lac processing venture undertaken by Shri Sainath Mahila Udyam Samuh, with support from Udyogini and Nagriha Farmer Producer Company Limited, promotes sustainability through strategic decision-making and technical training to its members. The group's ability to independently manage procurement of scrap lac and production of seed lac,

cover daily expenses (such as paying electricity bills for the unit), and reinvest in the unit reflects a forward-thinking approach. This cycle of financial reinvestment ensures the sustained growth of the unit, contributing to the overall sustainability of lac processing activities in the region.

**Spawn Unit (Mushroom):** Jai Ambe Mushroom Utpadak Samuh, established by Udyogini, underwent comprehensive training for managing the spawn unit. To enhance operational efficiency and product promotion, the group developed pamphlets, boards, and banners, improving the visibility of their enterprise. Both the group and the unit have attained self-sufficiency, operating without ongoing support from Udyogini. They participate in joint marketing initiatives, enabling them to independently cover the unit's electricity expenses. This self-sufficiency ensures the longevity of their operations, contributing to the overall sustainability of mushroom cultivation in the community.

## 6 Recommendations

To further improve the outcomes of HRDP in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh, the following recommendations are made for the HDFC Bank's *Parivartan* and HRDP teams and the implementing partner:

### Recommendations to Sustain Project Initiatives

- Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of each unit. Regular assessments can identify challenges early on, allowing for timely interventions and adjustments in the project strategy.
- The tamarind processing unit's machinery should undergo repairs to prevent recurring issues that disrupt production. Additionally, members should receive basic technical training, and the unit must keep spare parts readily available to ensure uninterrupted production.

### Recommendations to Build Project Efficiency

- Conduct training programmes for WEG members on market trends, pricing strategies, and market demands. This will empower them to make informed decisions, negotiate better prices, and explore diverse market channels.
- Encourage skill development for WEG members to stay current with processing techniques and market trends. Explore opportunities for WEGs to access modern technologies, including machinery upgrades and digital marketing tools, enhancing visibility and expanding market reach for sustained competitiveness and growth.

### Recommendations to Strengthen Project Design

- Facilitate access to finance for WEGs through FPC, or through the provision of grants and seed funding for direct injection of capital. The approach should recognise the diverse financial needs of WEGs and seek to address barriers they may face. By utilising the FPC, the WEGs can benefit from expert guidance and financial planning resources tailored to their specific business goals.
- Offer financial literacy training to WEGs to equip these with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the intricacies of managing and optimising their financial resources.
- It should also offer support in preparing robust business plans to further strengthen the capacity of WEGs to secure funding and sustain their enterprises from the immediate to long term.
- The project should deliver personalised training for each group, which would entail enhanced organisational capacity within the implementing agency, necessitating regular handholding of each group. After this customisation can be done to categorise groups into those requiring basic skills and those with enterprises operating at a slightly more advanced level. The handholding support can be adjusted accordingly.

## Annexures

### A Sampling Methodology

The quantitative household survey was administered for four thematic areas in the district.

#### A.1 Quantitative Sample Size Calculation

For this study, the formula for calculation of finite sample size for one-time cross-sectional survey (Cochran's 1977), has been deemed appropriate. The formula used to estimate the sample size for the quantitative household survey is given below:

$$N = Z_{1-\alpha}^2 \times P(1 - P) \times D_{eff} \div (S_e)^2$$

Where,

N= sample size

P= key characteristic of the population, set at 50%;

$Z_{1-\alpha}$ = standard score corresponding to the confidence interval, set at 95% (1.96 for two tailed test);

$S_e$ = margin of error, set at 5%;

$D_{eff}$ = factor for design effect, set at 1 (no design effect)

Thus, the estimated maximum sample size is *(enter number)*.

#### A.2 Quantitative Sampling Methodology

All the ten project villages were selected for the study. The stages of sampling are explained as follows:

##### **Stage 1: Selection of beneficiaries:**

The list of beneficiaries from all the nine villages acted as the sampling frame for the project. This list was obtained from the implementing partner – Udyogini. Simple random sampling was done to select the required number of households from within the list. Since beneficiary selection was undertaken independently for each project, the selection of more than one beneficiary from a single household was probable.

##### **Stage 2: Sampling for villages:**

Sampling for each village was done using the Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) method. The percentage of the total number of beneficiaries in a village was taken out from the total beneficiaries. This percentage was then converted into a sample per village. A total of nine villages were covered under the survey.

#### A.3 Qualitative Sample Size Calculation

Qualitative tools of In-depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were administered for obtaining information about the remaining themes as well as to enrich the household survey information with a deeper understanding.

Since there was no baseline available for this evaluation, recall method was used in the household survey to assess the change that has happened over time. For this purpose, the respondents were

asked to recall the value of critical indicators that they could recall from the time the Programme started.

## B Theme-wise Sustainability Matrix

The programme support demonstrated the ability to continue even after its conclusion. The programme’s support to sustain improved outcomes are enumerated below (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Theme-wise Sustainability Matrix**

Support Provided	Structures Established	Technical Know-how	Usage	Maintenance
Clean Energy	✓		✓	
Agriculture Training and Support	✓	✓	✓	
Entrepreneurship Development	✓	✓	✓	✓
Livestock Management	✓	✓	✓	