



# Impact Assessment Report

## ITC Mission Sunehra Kal Horizon II: Women Empowerment

MARCH 2025

**Prepared for: ITC Limited**

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# About ITC’s Mission Sunehra Kal (MSK)

## For Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

ITC’s Social Investments Programme implements its CSR interventions under the banner ‘Mission Sunehra Kal’ for sustainable and inclusive growth. These interventions are spread across two horizons.

- Horizon I: To improve the current livelihoods of communities, particularly in agriculture and allied sectors.**
- Horizon II: Build capabilities and capacities to empower these communities for a brighter future.**

The current report presents the Impact Assessment findings of the Women Empowerment programmes undertaken in 2022-23, which is shared below:

**Programmes assessed:**

- Targeted Hardcore Poor (THP) Programme
  - Financial Literacy (FL) Programme
- both these interventions are exclusively focused on women

## Context

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### Findings

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# Study Methodology

The research study adopts a **quasi-experimental methodology** by adopting both **quantitative and qualitative tools for data collection**.

The quantitative tools consist of **structured beneficiary questionnaire and control questionnaire\***, while the qualitative tool consists of **key informant interviews, focused group discussions and case studies**.

The key impact parameters were gauged on two parameters

- ✓ **Programme impact parameters were compared to baseline indicator**
- ✓ **Programme impact parameters were compared to control indicator**



\*Control questionnaire is asked to those, who are demographically similar to the beneficiary population, but have not received any programme-based assistance.

## Overall Approach:

### Quasi Experimental Design:

Used to assess impact by comparing intervention and comparison groups without full randomization.

## Data Collection Tools:

### Quantitative Tools:

Structured surveys with beneficiary and control group

### Qualitative Tools:

Focused group discussions (FGDs) and Key informant interviews (KIIs)

The mixed-method within quasi experimental design ensures triangulation of evidence between beneficiary and control groups while also providing narrative insights.

# Sampling & Data Collection Tools

The treatment and control group sample are selected based on demographics, geographic locations, and relevant characteristics in alignment with the study objectives.

## For quantitative assessment,

- The sampling is calculated using **Cochran's formula** for large population study which is significant at **95% confidence level** with **5% margin of error**. This ensures precision and confidence in results and minimization of type I errors.
- The sampled population is divided across project districts in a state.

## For qualitative insights,

- The study utilizes a **purposive sampling** to ensure representation of diverse perspectives within the treatment groups based on program's objective.

Sr. No.	Programme	Stakeholders	Data Collection Tools
1	Targeted Hardcore Poor Programme	Beneficiary women (treatment)	Survey and Focused Group Discussions
		Women (control*)	Survey
		Panchayat officials	Key Informant Interview
		NGO partners	
2	Financial Literacy Programme	SHG women (treatment)	Survey
		SHG women (control)	
		Financial literacy community resource person	Focused Group Discussions
		NGO partners	Key Informant Interview

## \*Control Group in THP:

Consisted of women-headed households from a nearby village where the programme has not been implemented but who share similar socio-economic and demographic conditions like THP women



# Targeted Hardcore Poor Programme (THP)

ITC's Targeting Hardcore Poor Woman Programme (THP) operates with an inclusive perspective aimed at **uplifting ultra-poor women** who head households with an income of less than Rs. 2,500 per month and lack an able-bodied male adult in the family.

The program's approach is holistic- it begins by providing participants with in-depth training on managing a micro-enterprise, covering everything from basic financial literacy to supply chain management and customer relations. In addition to training and financial support, the women were linked to social security schemes, self-help groups, and access to health services, giving her family greater stability and security for improving their quality of life.

The impact assessment reveals significant findings about the programme's benefits amidst the transforming women empowerment scenario in India.

**Direct Impact**

- A significant transition from daily wage labor (74%) and domestic work (18%) to **micro-enterprise (94%)** was observed in the treatment group after the programme.
- Average monthly income of TG respondents increased **to Rs. 12,730- 213% higher than before the intervention**. Also, **87% THP women were earning over Rs. 10,000/- per month, post intervention**.
- **A staggering 99% beneficiaries** reported that their business or livelihood has positively influenced their family's financial well-being.
- **An impressive 98% of TG beneficiaries now have bank accounts** (100% in Saharanpur), facilitating savings and access to credit.

**Cascading Impact**

- **Significantly 85% beneficiaries** felt capable of managing their business without external support.
- **63% of TG respondents-maintained income and expense records** compared to 38% in CG, reflecting improved financial management and accountability.
- Women's success in entrepreneurship likely encouraged others in the community to explore self-employment over informal labor.

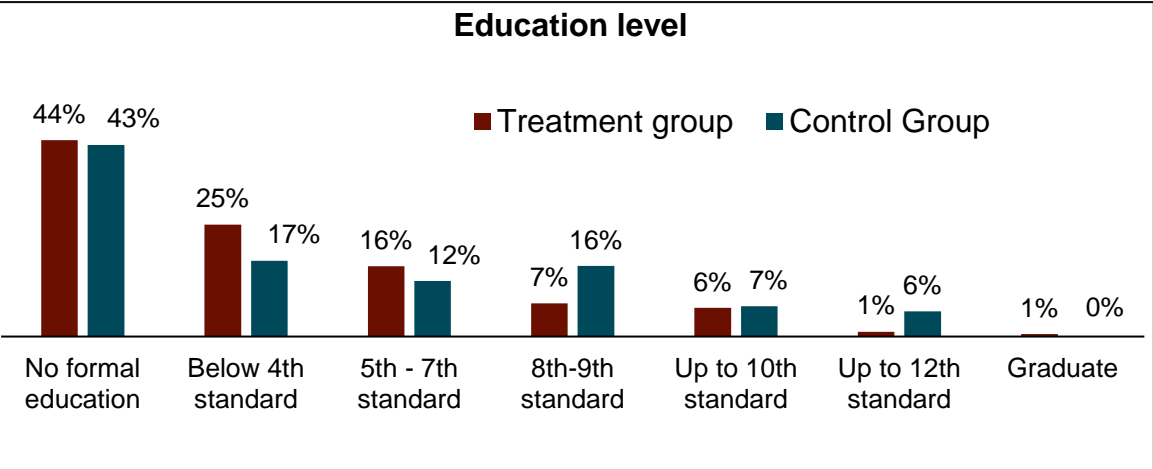
Location	Treatment Sample (TG)	Control sample (CG)	Key Informant Interview	Focused Group Discussions
Damoh, Madhya Pradesh	127	37	3	1
Haridwar, Uttarakhand	125	27	3	1
Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh	125	25	3	1
Total	377	89	9	3



# Targeted Hardcore Poor Woman Programme (THP)

## Demographic details

- ❖ The sample consists of 377 respondents from the treatment group (TG) and 89 respondents from the control group (CG).
- ❖ The average age of respondents in the TG was around 43 years, while the CG had a younger average age of 39 years.
- ❖ TG (93%) and CG (94%) both primarily consists of marginalized caste groups, like Minority groups, OBCs, and SC population.
- ❖ Within sample, 75% beneficiaries could write their name, in contrast, the control group had a literacy rate, of 70%.
- ❖ The study reveals that the target group had an average family size of 3 members. In contrast, CG reported a slightly larger average of 4 members.
- ❖ Within sample, 45% of the CG held Priority Household (PHH) cards, compared to a slightly higher 46% in the TG. Among others, 25% TG and 37% CG were BPL cardholders.
- ❖ Among Beneficiaries, 98% had a bank account, while 87% of the CG participants had accounts.



Considering the living condition, an **impressive 90% THP beneficiaries owned their houses** and 69% were living in pucca houses where 21% lived in semi-pucca houses.

The availability of toilets improved significantly among THP beneficiaries due to the programme's intervention. Before the programme, only 28% of households in Damoh, 60% in Haridwar, and 61% in Saharanpur had toilets. **After the intervention, these numbers rose to 74%, 95%, and 85%, respectively, demonstrating a major improvement in sanitation access.**

## Livelihood and household income

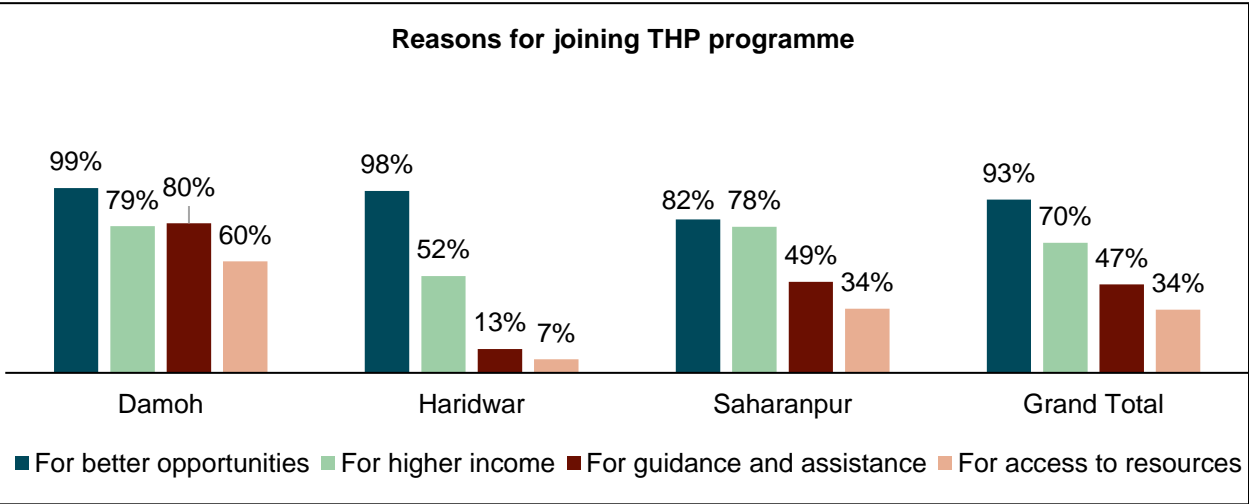
Among THP beneficiaries, the average number of working men per household is 0, while the average number of working women is 1, suggesting that women were primary income earners in these households.

The programme focused on women earning less than Rs. 2,500 per month, however after the programme-- the average monthly business income increased to—

Average monthly income (Rs.)	Damoh	Haridwar	Saharanpur	Overall
	10,809	16,671	10,740	12,730

Change in occupation among respondents			
Income Source	Treatment group before THP	Treatment group after THP	Control group
Agriculture	0%	1%	11%
Animal husbandry	1%	0%	0%
Private job	1%	0%	3%
Daily wage worker	73.5%	5%	70%
Business/ Self-employed	6.5%	94%	18%
Maid	18%	0%	7%
Homemaker	0%	0%	6%

# Targeted Hardcore Poor Woman Programme (THP)



The most commonly chosen enterprise among beneficiaries was a grocery store (28%), with Saharanpur having the highest percentage (34%). Tailoring business (20%) was another popular choice, whereas cosmetics (13%), saree stall (9%), vegetable vendor (8%) and garment/clothing sales (8%) were also selected.

The initiative provided monetary support in the form of business raw materials ranging from Rs. 11,500 to Rs. 12,000. to help the beneficiaries to establish or expand their enterprises. Average asset value has grown to Rs. 28,184.

After the programme, an impressive 98% beneficiaries, reported having a bank account, with 100% in Saharanpur achieving this milestone.

## About Business

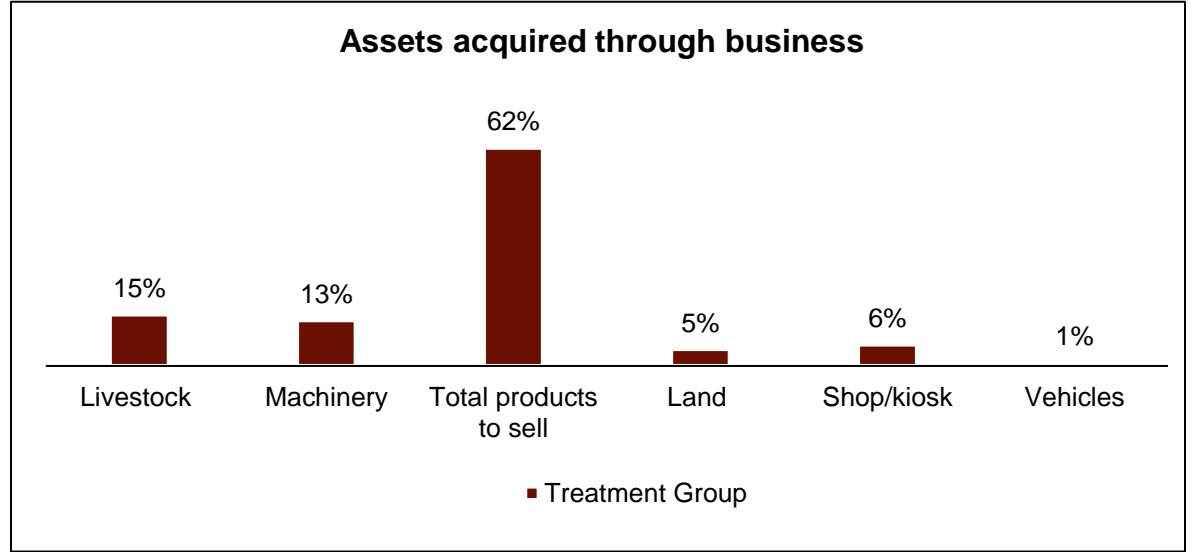
The beneficiaries reported a substantial 213% increase in their income post-programme, reflecting the effectiveness of financial assistance and mentorship in enhancing business profitability and sustainability.

The average value of assets acquired in TG was Rs. 28,184 from Rs. 12,000 at baseline.

Among the TG respondents, 63% maintained a record of their income and expenses from business, demonstrating improved financial literacy and business management skills.

This is significantly higher than the 38% in the CG, indicating that structured interventions have helped TG participants adopt better financial practices.

Average value of asset across locations (Rs.)	Damoh	Haridwar	Saharanpur	Overall
	22,632	31,820	30,191	28,184



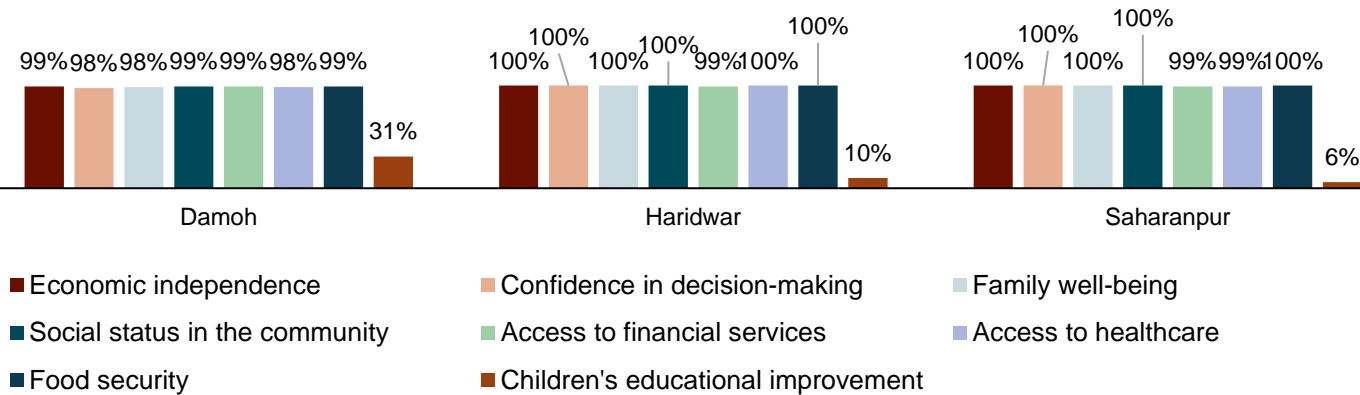
In CG, only 18% had some kind of small business, the rest were part of daily wage work

# Targeted Hardcore Poor Woman Programme (THP)

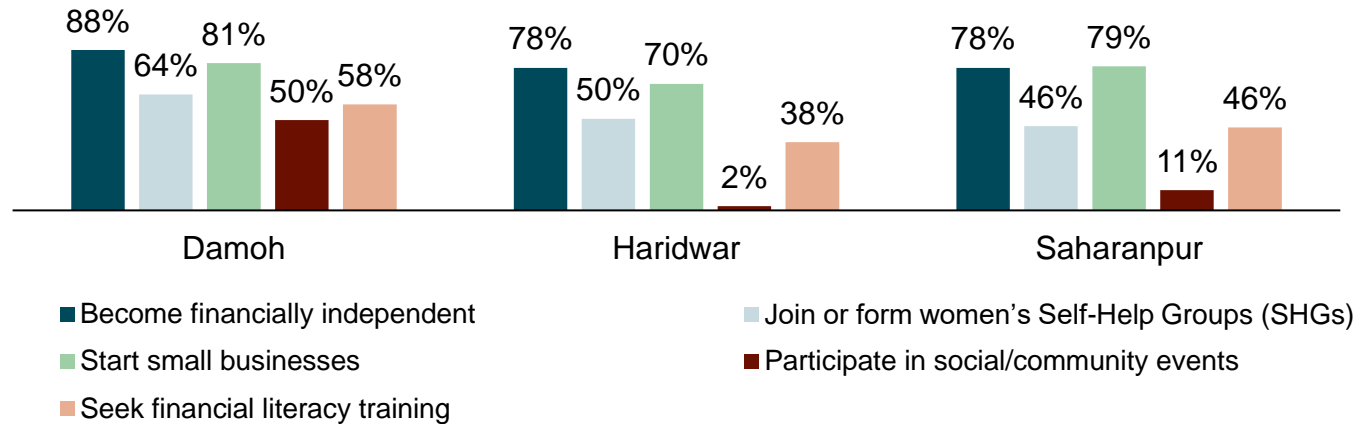
## Overall Impact

**87% THP women were earning over Rs.10,000/- per month, post intervention. A staggering 99% beneficiaries reported that their business or livelihood has positively influenced their family's financial well-being. This has empowered rural women with tangible benefits, such as 97% ensuring regular meals for their families, and 67% affording medical care with ease.**

Impact of THP Programme on lives of beneficiaries



Influence of THP programme on women in community

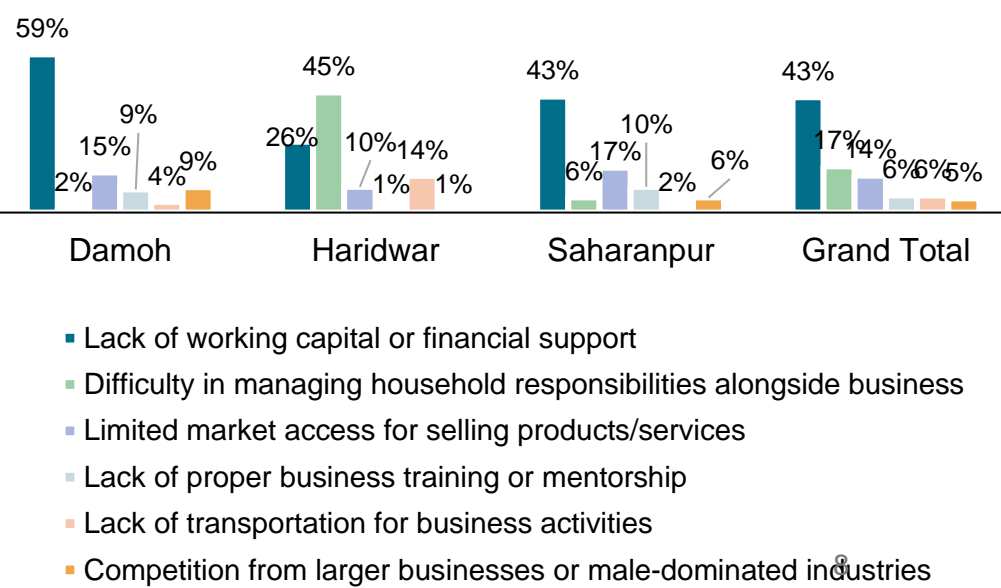


## Impact on standard of living

Regarding self-perception and confidence, 100% of TG participants agreed that the programme helped them to develop a business, while 85% beneficiaries felt capable of managing their business without external support. Additionally, confidence in decision-making was another remarkable impact, with 98% women expressing confidence in their ability to make decisions after receiving training from the intervention.

When asked about income growth, within CG only 4% strongly agreed that they were earning more than before, and 44% agreed. **This is notably lower than the target group, where 88% reported increased income due to programme interventions.**

## Key challenges in growing business beyond current level





# Targeted Hardcore Poor Woman Programme (THP)

## Sajida Khatoon - Story of Determination

Sajida Khatoon, a widow with one daughter, lives in Ballia Kheri (Saharanpur district). She lost her husband after the birth of her girl child. Post that she was meeting her family expenses from her stitching business, but it was not a life of comfort.

**Challenges faced:** Facing financial constraints, she found it difficult to start a business independently. As a widow in a conservative society with no prior business experience, she also battled social stigma and internalized the belief that her stitching work was merely an act of charity rather than a viable livelihood.

**Support received:** After MSK team's initial screening, she was selected for the programme, in 2022 and received following support:

- Financial Assistance: Received Rs.11,500/- worth assets for her business.
- Business Training: Basic financial literacy and management skills.
- Emotional Support: Encouraging her to stand strong against societal challenges.

With financial aid, Sajida started a small fruit shop. She used the funds to purchase goods in bulk at discounted rate and set up a shop inside her house so that she didn't have to pay rent and no cost of travelling either.

**Impacts:** The programme was highly beneficial for Sajida. Earlier, she worked as a maid and earned Rs.2,000/- per month. With the support of the programme and her fruit shop, she now earns Rs.14,000/- per month as net income. She opened a bank account, started savings for the first time, and was able to buy a refrigerator. The total value of assets she now owns for her shop – like fridge, weighing scale, baskets and other items, is around Rs.24,000. She also got enrolled in Ayushman Bharat and became part of an SHG.

Sajida is a role model and source of inspiration for many women in her community. She also has been able to meet expenses related to her daughter's education and medical expenses.

## Savita Lodhi – From daily wages to a entrepreneur

Savita Lodhi, from Patera block (Damoh district) was working as daily wage labour, with limited means and no male earning member in her family.

**Challenges faced:** Savita was facing financial hardships, lacked basic amenities at home and no access to sanitation facility at home. Her life was marked by uncertainty and a constant struggle to meet even basic needs.

**Support received:** After MSK team's initial screening, she was selected for the programme, in 2022 and received following support:

- Financial Assistance: Received Rs.11,500/- worth assets for her business.
- Business Training: Basic financial literacy and management skills.
- Emotional Support: Encouraging her to stand strong against societal challenges

With financial support, she could set up a small grocery shop, where she used the funds to rent a shop and buy raw materials for sale.

**Impacts:** Earlier she earned Rs.2,000/- per month from daily wage work. Now, she earns approximately Rs.17,500/- per month as net income. Her business assets are currently valued at around Rs.30,000/-, which include grocery stock, furniture, weighing scales, and mobile phone. This is a significant shift from when she had no assets or steady income. Her living conditions also improved, after the programme, installing an LPG connection, acquiring a two-wheeler, television, fridge, and most importantly, constructed a toilet through the Swachh Bharat Mission. She also joined a SHG, started saving regularly, and gained access to a support network. Savita's transformation from 2022 to 2024 reflects her determination and the catalytic role of the programme

Today, Savita stands as a self-reliant entrepreneur in her village, a story of resilience and change made possible through timely support, personal effort, and a strong will to move forward.

# Financial Literacy Programme

ITC's women empowerment programme is built on four core pillars: Empowered Grassroots Institutions, Financial Capability Building, Livelihoods and Women Entrepreneurs, and Social Security. At the heart of this initiative is the Women Empowerment Self Help Group (SHG) programme, a comprehensive approach to economically empowering women in rural India.

## ❖ Empowering Women through Self-Help Groups

The SHG programme brings women together, providing a platform for them to pool resources, share knowledge, and engage in income-generating activities. Through this programme, women gain essential skills and knowledge in financial planning, savings, insurance, and credit, as well as entrepreneurship training. This enables them to become economically independent, strengthening their position as decision-makers in their families and communities.

## ❖ Social Empowerment and Community Development

The programme goes beyond economic empowerment, focusing on social empowerment by encouraging women to express their opinions, participate in decision-making processes, and advocate for their rights. By partnering with local NGOs and government agencies, ITC facilitates access to credit, markets, and technology for these SHGs, fostering sustainable livelihoods and community development. This, in turn, strengthens social cohesion and promotes gender equality in rural areas.

Location	Treatment sample	Control sample	Key Informant Interview	Focused Group Discussions
Anuppur, Madhya Pradesh	36	8	1	1
Ashok Nagar, Madhya Pradesh	38	9	1	1
Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh	38	9	1	1
Barwani, Madhya Pradesh	38	7	2	1
Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh	39	8	1	1
Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh	35	6	1	1
Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh	38	8	1	
Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh	40	9	2	
Panna, Madhya Pradesh	37	8	1	
Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh	40	8	2	1
Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh	37	11	1	1
Baran, Rajasthan	36	5		
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>

# Financial Literacy Programme

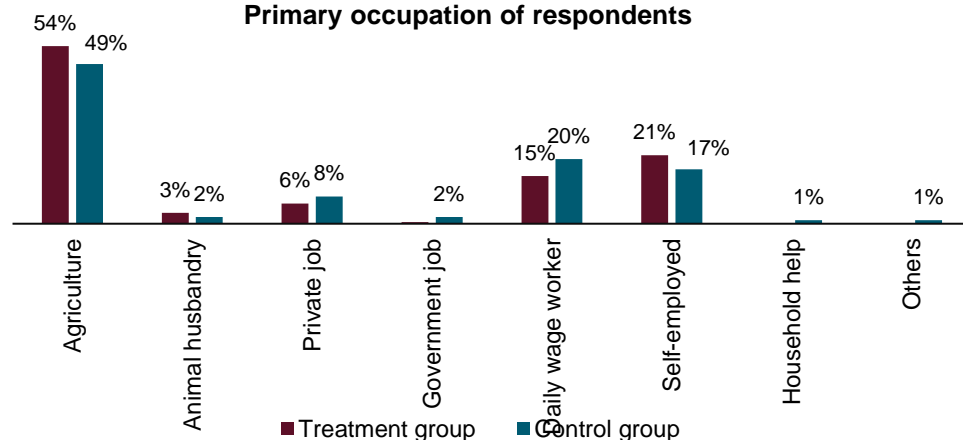
## Key Demography

- The sample consisted of 452 women respondents from the treatment group (TG), and 96 women from control group (CG)
- 67% were in the 26-40 age range in TG and majority were from marginalized castes
- Majority of TG (74%) and CG (97%) stayed in pucca houses
- 30% of TG had no formal education and 60% were below poverty line
- 100% of TG respondents had bank accounts indicating better financial inclusion
- The male to female working ratio was well balanced with 56% to 44%
- Formal employment was limited with agriculture being the largest source of income
- 78% of respondents earned < Rs 1 lakh per year

## SHG Membership

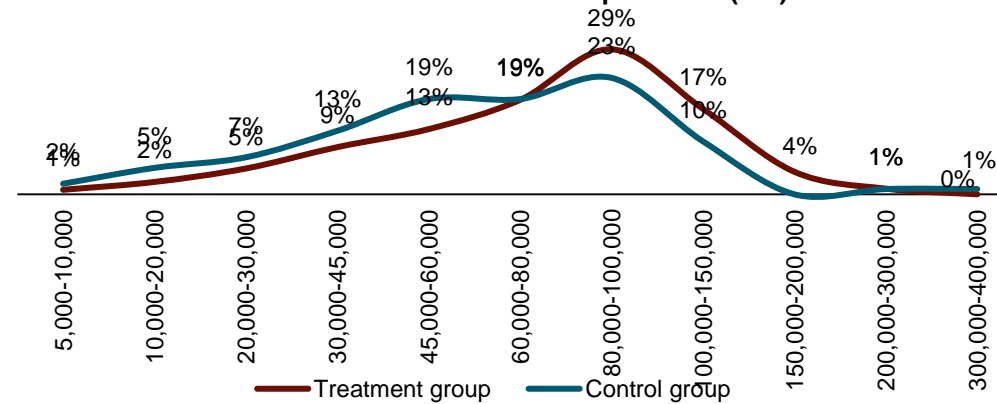
- 100% of TG and CG members were Self Help Group (SHG) members
- Majority of women joined due to peers while few joined due to encouragement from NGO volunteers
- SHG leaders were selected based on nominations by members (90%)
- SHGs supported their members in myriads of ways from economic empowerment opportunities to skilling, social support and access to services.
- In addition to helping women inculcate the habit of saving, access financial resources and invest in livelihood, these groups provided them with a platform to seek support and solidarity based on shared experiences thus having a profound impact on their lives

Primary occupation of respondents



TG respondents witnessed a marked improvement in various aspects of their day to day life with >90% agreeing that membership of SHGs provided them several opportunities, benefits and confidence thereby improving their social standing and contributing to their economic growth

Annual household income of respondents (Rs.)





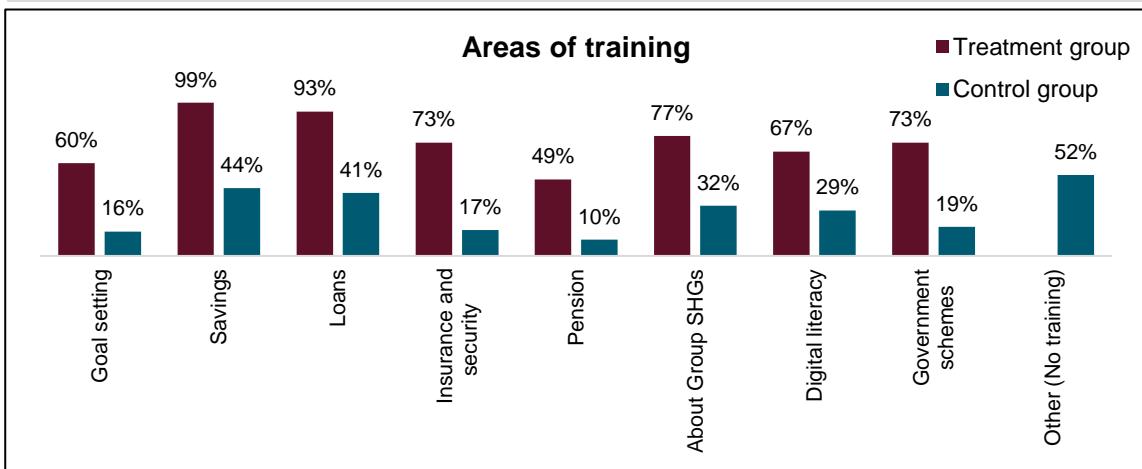


# Financial Literacy Programme

## Programme and its Impact

### Financial Literacy Programme - Details

ITC's Mamta ki Kahani is an initiative under which 99% of TG in Madhya Pradesh and 97% in Rajasthan received financial literacy training from FL-CRPs known as Yojana Sakhis, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to manage their finances effectively through. Only 24% of respondents in the Control Group (CG) received similar training from other NGOs



### Impact

- ~98% TG learnt essential financial skills from the FLP as compared to 25% CG respondents
- 89% of TG took loans from their SHG, with 44% TG taking loans between Rs 25,000-50,000 for uses like business expansion, marriage and education expenses
- 68% of TG credited FLP with significantly empowering them to access and utilize social security schemes
- 100% Yojana Sakhis observed increase in digital transactions post FLP
- Investment in pension schemes, insurance and savings increased post FLP

### Yojana Sakhis (FL-CRP)

- ITC's Yojana Sakhis are women volunteers who are trained in financial literacy and they in turn train members of SHGs in various aspects of finance
- The average age of Yojana Sakhi was 37 and 73% held BPL ration cards
- Majority joined the programme to earn income and improve their social standing
- Respondents faced several challenges in completing their training post selection including travelling long distances to reach their training centre
- 1 Yojana Sakhi trained on an average 16 SHGs in a month and 71 in a year earning Rs 500 per training. The overall average income of Yojana Sakhis was Rs. 8,050 per month.

Impact of FLP	TG	CG
My knowledge on financial services and credit facilities has improved	98%	61%
I am better aware of government schemes and have been able to suggest the same to the community.	94%	60%
The programme has successfully fostered leadership skillsets in me	94%	59%
The programme has provided me confidence and motivation to take critical financial decisions when it comes to my personal finances	95%	57%
The programme provided me confidence to take financial decisions in the family	91%	61%
Due to the training, I feel confident in using digital financial tools	90%	55%
Because of the training, I was able to secure a better livelihood opportunity.	91%	56%
I am better respected in my community by male and female population alike	93%	59%
It has indirectly impacted the women of all ages in the community	94%	54%
The Programme has contributed to the economic growth of the village	94%	55%
The Programme has provided me respect in the community	97%	60%

# Financial Literacy Programme

## Relevance, impact and recommendations

### Cascading impact of FLP on TG and FLCRPs

- The FL programme has benefited both the TG and the Yojana Sakhis in several ways, empowering these women
- For Yojana Sakhis, the FL programme has provided economic independence resulting in an improvement in their lifestyle as well as the respect gained within their community
- For SHG members this programme has not only equipped them with financial knowledge but given them the confidence to voice their opinions in their family and community
- For the larger community, the FLP programme has helped in empowering families to undertake informed decisions on savings, loans and helped them avail useful schemes aiding their income
- The FL programme inculcates gender equality and financial inclusion
- Digital knowledge and entrepreneurship opportunities have helped in improving socio-economic status of respondents

### The way forward

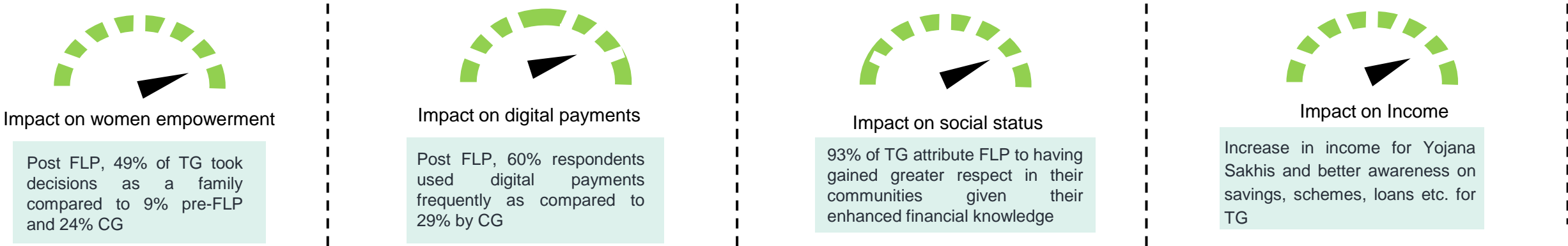
**Partnerships and Collaborations:** Strengthening partnerships with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and financial institutions can expand the reach and impact of the programme

**Enhance Awareness and Training:** Utilize digital medium for upskilling Yojana Sakhis and also provide customized digital content to enable them to attract and impart effective training to SHG members

**Focus on Women's Empowerment:** Support women's self-help groups, encourage more women to be financially literate and independent, provide entrepreneurship opportunities, facilitate mentoring for women entrepreneurs, strengthen their marketing linkages and enhance digital infrastructure

**Empowerment through identification:** Provide identity cards to FLCRPs to lend credibility to their work

**Promote Sustainable Practices:** The programme needs support from government and other sources to multiply its impact. Given that its benefits are multi-fold not only to the TG or Yojana Sakhis but to the families as well as the community, it needs to be furthered to benefit more women



# Financial Literacy Programme

## Endeavour to Empower– Reshma Singh

Reshma Singh, a resident of Bhandara village, Barwani, Madhya Pradesh attended the Financial Literacy Programme (FLCRP) training in December 2022. Prior to the training, Reshma faced significant financial challenges such as lack of savings, uncontrolled spending, and inability to meet essential family needs. The FLCRP training provided Reshma with the knowledge to manage her finances effectively. Reshma began saving money consistently, both at home and in a bank account. Through a self-help group, she obtained a bank loan of Rs. 15,000. Reshma prioritized her children's education by purchasing a laptop, which enabled them to gain computer education.

Using the loan and her savings, Reshma invested in livestock, purchasing a goat. This investment proved successful, as her initial number of goats grew to four. Thus, a combination of savings, income diversification, and responsible credit use significantly improved Reshma's financial stability. Reshma Singh's story is evidence of the transformative power of financial literacy.

## Endeavour to Empower– Sonam Jatav



Sonam Jatav, a resident of Harsi, Madhya Pradesh was encouraged to form a SHG by a social worker. Post forming the group and being its bookkeeper, Sonam took on the role of a Bank Sakhi and subsequently a Yojana Sakhi for ITC.

Today, she earns an income of Rs.20,000 per month and has opened an online centre to help people. Realizing the importance of education and its transformational effect, she has enrolled her children in good schools and continues to use her knowledge for the benefit of her family and community.