

Evaluation of Project Shakti

Continuity with Change Final Report

Submitted to

SANJOG

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Executive Summary

The present report is based on a year-end evaluation of the Shakti project, led by Sanjog and its Partners, namely PAT (a consortium of CBOs), BBSS, and HELP. The project has been under implementation in select districts of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. The reference period of the study is 2018-24.

The study's objectives are to understand the effectiveness of the survivor centric CBR approach in the rehabilitation of survivors of sex trafficking. Additionally, the study was mandated to identify some of the areas that the project could potentially stop and handover the same to the survivors to manage it on their own, particularly related to Case Management. The study also sought to understand the potential for reducing the dependence of the survivors' SHG leaders on social workers.

Through a field visit conducted during the first week of March 2024, followed by a series of online interactions with the Sanjog Project team, HELP team, the core team managing the technology component of the Shakti project and a review of the documents and information shared by the partners and Sanjog, the present study has presented its findings.

Based on the field observations and findings, the evaluators recommend:

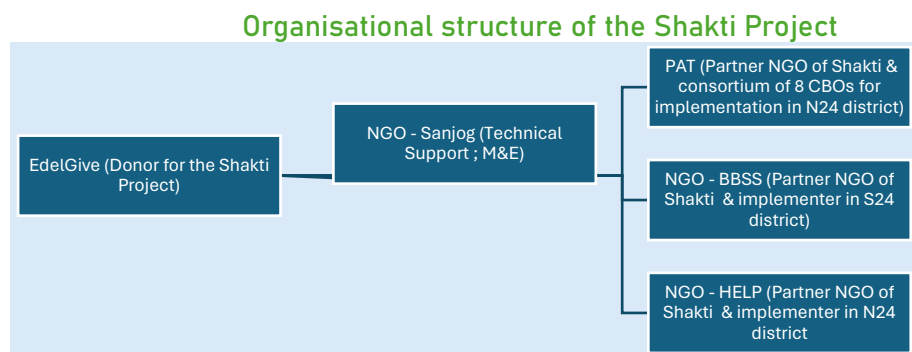
- i. Handing over the CMS to the CBOs who have gathered enough experience and are fully conversant with the processes. In this process, the CIT can be fully handed over to the survivors.
- ii. Advocacy of the CBR methodology at the district & state levels for holistic rehabilitation of the survivors and creating synergies within the departments and external agencies.
- iii. Effective communication among the partners for smooth implementation and clarity in their roles and responsibilities.
- iv. Better technology to assist in timely and accurate MIS, including technical support for troubleshooting.
- v. Promotion of livelihoods for survivors and working with the block-level administration for access to training programs and ready platforms for markets.
- vi. Establish the ground rules and communicate the same to the partners for effective implementation of FEP and TPCM for an effective engagement with the duty bearers and accelerated implementation of the CBR.

1. Background of the Shakti Project

Survivor at the centre of Community-Based Rehabilitation: Owing to gaps in the regulatory and policy landscape as well as absence of exclusive government schemes to address rehabilitation for survivors of trafficking, or other forms of gender-based violence, the CBR approach within the Shakti project is based on the centrality of the survivors.

Starting from the identification of their needs (including mental and physical health), educating them on their rights & entitlements, building leadership qualities among survivors, and enabling them to gain access to social protection and other welfare schemes for the survivors, for group or individual livelihood activities. Partnerships with NGOs, and CBOs and an active engagement with the Duty Bearers (government officials and elected PRI representatives at village and block levels) have been a defining element of the Shakti project.

The Shakti project has been operational for the last 6 years in select districts of West Bengal and nearly two years in Andhra Pradesh. Managed through a set of partner NGOs implemented through Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), the project is based on community-based rehabilitation (CBR) of survivors of trafficking.



2. Aim & Objectives of the study

In the pursuit of program optimization and responsiveness to evolving community needs, Sanjog has commissioned a year-end evaluation of the Shakti project.

Aim of the study: To take stock and ask if and how is the Shakti project closer to answering the question, "What works to address accelerated and sustainable rehabilitation of women survivors of trafficking?"



Specific objectives of the study:

- **Assess the following:**
 - Effectiveness of the CBR approach of the Shakti program for trafficked women and their empowerment
 - Viability of stopping two specific components - initiating the Case Planning handover in West Bengal & reducing dependence on social workers for activities related to SHG leaders
 - Readiness of partners for a potential handover
- 3. **Provide recommendations to guide the future course that the Shakti program needs to follow for efficiency and effectiveness**

4. Methodology

To evaluate the community-based rehabilitation (CBR) Shakti project for survivors of trafficking, the evaluators adopted the following qualitative methodology for data collection:

- Identifying the key stakeholders for qualitative discussions: Consultation with the Shakti team at Sanjog (particularly the Programme Lead and MEL Coordinator), a list key stakeholders including survivors, survivor leaders, partner agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), social workers, self-help group (SHG) leaders, and government officials at various levels (block level officials, PRIs) was prepared for the discussions at the field level (in West Bengal).
- Preparation of checklist: A checklist of discussion questions was prepared before the start of the field visits. The key discussion themes for each stakeholder category have been indicated below:

S.No.	Stakeholder Category	Key discussion themes
1.	Survivors	1. Involvement in Case Planning Process and Empowerment 2. Changes in Self-Perception, Autonomy, and Mental Health Support 3. Support in Developing Livelihood Skills and Access to Services 4. Community Attitudes, Support Networks, and Advocacy 5. Satisfaction with Shakti Program and Areas for Improvement 6. Priorities for Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities
2.	Social Workers	1. Pressing Needs and Priorities for Survivors 2. Effectiveness of Case Management Process and Integration of Skills 3. Methods for Engaging Survivors and Inclusion in Services 4. Empowerment Programs, Social Participation, and Transition to SHGs 5. Challenges in CBR Implementation and Capacity Building 6. Continued Support and Leveraging Partnerships
3.	SHG Leaders:	1. Collaboration in the Handover of Case Planning and Independent Management 2. Access to Banking Services, Savings Behaviour, and Loan Utilization 3. Benefits of Financial Inclusion and Challenges in Transactions 4. Impact on Economic Independence and Empowerment 5. Suggestions for Continued Support and Addressing Challenges
4.	Partner NGOs	1. Alignment with CBR Approach Objectives and Tailoring Interventions 2. Capacity Building and Professional Growth of Staff 3. Stakeholder Coordination and Collaboration with Sanjog 4. Effectiveness of Service Delivery and Monitoring Systems 5. Challenges and Solutions in Working with Organizations 6. Resource Allocation, Utilization, and Advocacy Initiatives
5.	Block Officials	1. Impact of Community Rehabilitation Program and Government Involvement 2. Addressing Specific Needs of Survivors and Awareness Raising 3. Tailoring CBR Approach to Context and Support for Capacity Building 4. Integration into Planning Processes and Priorities for Investment
6.	Project Team	1. Effective Leadership Strategies and Collaboration Mechanisms 2. Risk Identification, Mitigation, and Decision-Making with Partners 3. Capacity Building and Resolution of Technical Issues 4. Legal Support, Livelihoods, and Program Success Measurement 5. Advocacy Initiatives and Stakeholder Engagement
7.	MIS Core Group	1. Effectiveness of MIS in Tracking Rehabilitation Progress and Contribution to Evidence-Based Decision-Making 2. Facilitation of Collaboration, Coordination, and Improvement in Data Management Efficiency 3. User-friendliness, Accessibility, and Training/Capacity Building for MIS Management 4. Mechanisms for Timely and Secure Data Entry, Addressing Connectivity, and Infrastructure Limitations 5. Challenges in Implementation, Maintenance, and Strategies for Mitigation 6. Support for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptation

- Desk review: Sanjog also shared a range of documents of the project, reports of previous concurrent evaluations undertaken, project log frame, Kaarya initiative, Training module of Tri-Party Case Management, and guidelines on Family Engagement Plan (FEP), to list a few that have helped the evaluators to understand the project, formulate the checklists for discussions and undertake the analysis as presented here.

- Process: The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Manager of Sanjog had been assigned to guide the evaluators in the field and coordinate throughout the study period.
- Selection of sites for field visit: Noting that the implementation in the N24 district was done in 8 blocks (through different CBOs) and the partner NGO (BBSS) that implemented the Shakti project only in one block (Canning) in the S24P district, it was agreed in discussion with the Shakti team at Sanjog that three blocks (at varying levels of performance) may be selected from N24P for the field visit. In addition, the only block in S24P (i.e. Canning) was agreed as a site for field visits. Based upon a request from the evaluators, a list of blocks in N24 districts was obtained through support from PAT. The list is presented below:

Choice of Sampling- North 24 Parganas, West Bengal				
2022- 2023-2024				
Sl.No	Selection Criteria	Basirhat-I	Hasnabad	Baduria
1	Submitted Application according to CITs	H	M	H
2	Advocacy and Escalation to the next level	M	L	L
3	Service demands Vs Service Received	M	M	M
4	Proactiveness of SW and facilitation skill	H	L	H
5	Relationship with Duty Bearers	H	H	L
6	Innovation and risk taking behaviour	H	H	M
7	Bring Service provider's accountability to the system	M	M	L
8	Relationship with community and stakeholders	H	M	M
9	Program Level outcome/Impacts	M	M	L
10	MIS and data base maintaining	H	L	L
11	SHG & livelihood initiatives	M	M	L
12	CBR promotion and Visibility	H	L	M
13	Trauma Care practices	H	L	L
14	Handover and sustainability strategy implementation	M	M	M
15	Inclusion of collective leaders in case management process	M	M	M
	Final Score	H-8 M-7	H-2 M-8 L-5	H-2 M-6 L-7
	Result	High	Modarate	Low

- Dates of Field Visit & Online Interactions:

Date	District	State	Block	CBO/NGO	Mode
04-03-2024	North 24 Parganas (N24)	West Bengal	Hasnabad	Kathakali Empowerment Youth Association (KEYA)	Site visit
05-03-2024	N24	West Bengal	Basirhat	Basirhat Initiative for Rural Dedication (BIRD)	
06-03-2024	N24	West Bengal	Baduria	North Sammayo Sromojibi (NSS)	
06-03-2024	N24	West Bengal	Baduria	Partners for Anti-Trafficking (PAT)	
07-03-2024	South 24 Parganas (S24)	West Bengal	Canning	Bansra Birangana Seva Samiti (BBSS)	
09-03-2024	Krishna, Guntur & Vijayawada	Andhra Pradesh	Total 7 Mandals (Blocks)	HELP	Online discussions
11-03-2024 & 20-03-2024	All			Shakti Project Team	Online
22-3-2024	All			MIS Core Group (Representatives of Sanjog, BBSS, BIRD, BUP)	Online

6. Key Findings: Observations & Analysis

i. Realising CBR through Case Management System (CMS)

A review of the project documents shared by Sanjog suggests that the CMS was aimed to empower survivors and frontline workers, including social workers from grassroots organizations and all other stakeholders (partners and even duty bearers) in the rehabilitation process.

➤ Case Intake Tool (CIT)

One of the major functionalities of the CMS is related to participatory identification (and recording) of the needs of the survivors through the CIT. As shared by Sanjog's project team, "There was a significant departure from the previous phase of the Shakti project, wherein the social workers (SWs) were the fulcrum to steer the project to the present phase where the focus is on the survivors."

Field-level observations (such as in Baduria and Basirhat) testify that a hard copy of the CIT is first used by the Social Worker from the CBO (who are the frontline workers under the Shakti project) to identify the needs of the survivor, record it on paper first and then subsequently enter it in the CIT module of the Sanyukt app.

Discussions with survivors during the field visit clearly indicate that once they get entrenched in the system are more familiar with their own case files and have a better handle on managing their mental health, the survivors start taking initiatives on their own and show more self-reliance by starting to fill out their own CITs. In this context, also pertinent to mention that the survivors acknowledge the crucial handholding support they receive from the Social Workers, as they progress towards self-reliance and independence.

However, it may be noted that of the 12 survivors (who had been associated with the project for at least 3 years) and with whom the evaluators met (across different locations in West Bengal), only about 30 percent who had at least completed their upper primary education (till class 8) were able to manage the CIT on their own. These survivors clearly expressed a distinct motivation and sense of empowerment to be able to now manage their cases. The same was also corroborated by the SWs during their interactions with the evaluators.

In fact, the introduction of CIT forms (not in the first meeting itself, but sometime in week 3 or 4) marked a significant milestone in the case management process. Despite initial struggles, survivors demonstrated resilience and adaptability in mastering the documentation procedures over time. By prioritizing survivors' comfort and readiness to share their experiences, the Partners and CBOs have justifiably helped to alleviate pressure and empower survivors in their journey toward recovery and reintegration. It was found that many of the educated survivors can manage their CITs after approximately six months to one year of the process being started. They are also trained to take new survivors under their wings and guide them during the initial period.

When the Social Workers were asked by the evaluators what keeps them coming to work each day, some said it was the people they get to work with. Others reported it was their perception that the survivors were heroes in their own way. The majority reported it was because they get to help people who are in need.

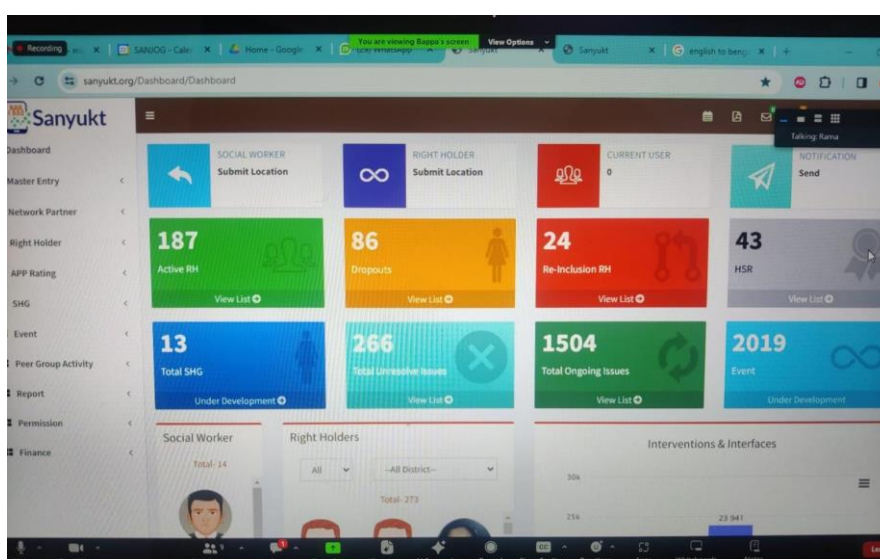
Building Capacity: Nazreen's Journey in Survivor Leadership and Case Management: For Nazreen, a survivor leader from Canning, "I have been associated with the Shakti project since 2019. There was some slowdown in 2020 and 2021 due to the Corona pandemic.

However, I have learned a lot about managing mental health for myself and my peers and picked up a few skills on how to help my peers when they are facing problems with mental health or even engaging with the duty bearers. If you ask me, whether I am capable of taking over the responsibility of case management, and if case management implies managing CIT, then I think I can handle it.” (Based on the discussions held by the evaluators)

➤ Sanyukt App: Functionality & utility

The evaluators understand that the role of the Sanyukt app is to inform project management and the CBOs to monitor the progress of CBR for each survivor. The app provides survivor-specific monitoring of the status of interventions ranging from counseling, leadership training, access to rights and entitlements, and economic empowerment.

Requests by the evaluation team to have a look at the Sanyukt web portal at the field locations could not be met, as the CBOs/Partners informed the team that the site has been down for some time now. The below screenshot was taken by the evaluation team during online interactions with the Core Team managing the Sanyukt app. The Core Team comprised representatives of the Sanjog project team at Sanjog, the IT team of Sanjog, BBSS (partner NGO), BIRD, and BUP (CBOs).



While the screenshot shows that a dashboard can be generated for getting an aggregate view and there are several functionalities linked to it, the evaluation team does not have any evidence to comment on the efficacy of the app in field situations.

As noted by the evaluators during the discussions with core team of Sanyukt and the CBOs too, maintaining the Sanyukt over the long term, including software updates, troubleshooting, and user support, has been a major challenge. Without adequate sustainability planning, the system may become outdated or dysfunctional, undermining its effectiveness in supporting stakeholder engagement and advocacy efforts. The evaluation team sees this as a potential challenge at Sanjog's end, along with no planning for technical backstopping, noting that the vendor for managing the backend had to be changed, leaving the system unattended. Mobilising additional resources and training a team of in-house software experts to do the technical backstopping can perhaps ensure optimal utilisation of the benefits of the Sanyukt portal.

➤ Uttar app for survivors

Noting that the Uttar app is meant for survivors to record the follow-up visits with the duty bearers on the status of applications for rights and entitlements, monitor the progress on the interventions, and rate the duty bearers based on services received or the progress in their applications.

Previous reports shared by the Shakti Project Team at Sanjog do provide some secondary evidence that the Uttar app was being used for rating the duty bearers. While the survivors reported confidence in using the *Uttar* app, and the Social Workers (SW) claimed to have played a significant role in handholding the survivors, and their leaders to navigate through the *Uttar* app, **the evaluators, could not see the Uttar app in action at any of the site visits.** The evaluators were informed by the survivors and the Social Workers that for the last few months, the app has not been functional. At another location, a survivor at Baduria in N24P said that she had forgotten her password and hence was not able to access the app. **The evaluators thus do not have any evidence to comment on the functionality and the utility of the Uttar app, except from what was verbally shared with the evaluators by the social workers, survivors, and even the CBOs/NGOs.**

Yet trying to understand the way the Uttar app might have benefitted the survivors, the evaluation team in its discussions with the Social Workers (SW) noted that the survivors might have been handheld by the SWS in navigating through the *Uttar* app, the evaluators do not have any evidence of establishing how the ratings in the *Uttar* app could have contributed (if not attributed) to the survivors' access to entitlements from the duty bearers or even exercising their rights.

Further, the evaluators are of the view that from the perspective of generating the desired responses from the duty bearers based on the survivors' rating of the duty bearers, the expectations from the project were rather normative and less realistic. Given the rigidities in local-level governance structures and the lack of any established system of a typical 360-degree rating of duty bearers by the citizens in the country, any rating mechanism of individual duty bearers may not generate buy-ins within the administrative setup.

The evaluation team also finds that the Uttar app suffers from a major limitation in terms of the element of subjectivity in the rating of the duty bearers by the survivors on a 1 to 10 scale (with 10 being the highest or the best rating and 1 being the lowest rating on a given dimension). Discussions with the core team of Sanyukt MIS¹ shows that there are no defined criteria for assigning a given score, thereby a gap on this front. In the same vein, it needs to be mentioned that at present survivors do exercise some form of subjective criteria to award a score on a given dimension. For instance, even if a given service may have been accessed by the survivor and if it turns out to be low in terms of their own perceptions of quality (such as the quality of rice received through the GR), the survivor may assign a lower score to the duty bearer.

Legal Assistance crucial for effective CBR

Survivor leaders affirmed the relevance of resources for pursuing legal cases. In this context, almost all survivors, survivor leaders, and even the social workers and the partner CBOs equivocally mentioned the synergies that came through the recently closed “Tafteesh” project. Some of the voices captured by the evaluation team, as mentioned below, establish the importance of expanding the scope of CBR projects to also include an element of resource provisioning for legal assistance.

¹ Representatives of Sanjog, PAT (the consortium of 8 CBOs), PAT's member CBOs (such as BIRD, BUP) and BBSS (another Partner).

"The Taftteesh project has been instrumental in helping us cover various costs, particularly for travel expenses associated with attending court hearings for victim compensation. "As the project concluded about two months ago, we've encountered difficulties in providing support to survivors for their court commutes." (Testimony from Bansra Birangana Sewa Samiti (Partner NGO), Canning I, S24P District)

"The Taftteesh project facilitated close engagement with public prosecutors to expedite hearings for our cases. However, with the project ending and one public prosecutor handling numerous cases, prioritizing survivors' cases has become challenging." (Testimony from Barasat Unnayan Prostuti (CBO), Barasat Block, N24P District)

"Projects like Taftteesh could provide additional funds to hire lawyers, enhancing our capacity to support survivor-centered approaches like Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR). We strongly advocate for integrating this component into the next phase of the Shakti project or securing new projects similar to Taftteesh to sustain CBR initiatives." (Testimony from Katakhalī Empowerment Youth Association (CBO), Hasnabad Block (N24P District))

ii. Mental health support to survivors

The survivor-centered approach puts extra effort into psychosocial support, an aspect largely overlooked in dominant articulations, because survivors have said it is integral to their recovery. Psychosocial support is addressed by the Shakti project by understanding the stigmatization faced by each survivor. The MH component finds its rationale in this understanding.

Initially facing challenges rooted in societal stigma and discrimination, survivors struggled to engage independently with duty-bearers. However, through the program's intervention, the initial two to three years of engagements have demonstrated a significant transformation in their abilities to navigate the pathways with the duty bearers. Over time, survivors have gradually gained confidence and independence, enabling them to interact with duty-bearers autonomously, without the need for external support from Social Workers. This progression evidently marks a substantial achievement in the empowerment of survivors, reflecting the positive impact of the program's long-term approach.

Building Trust - the Survivor Leaders' Approach to Managing the CIT: Trust building with peers appears to be the focus of the approach by survivor leaders. Discussions with some of the survivor leaders suggest that they believe that only through establishing a supportive relationship that the survivors can be made to feel comfortable enough to express their needs. Building the trust and a sense of camaraderie by the survivor leaders with their peer survivors, followed by the introduction of the CIT, is clearly shown to be working at the ground zero, as the latter have shown higher receptivity and empowerment to engage in the process of participatory decision-making for their rehabilitation. *As put by a survivor of sex trafficking, "One of the biggest hurdles I've encountered with newly rescued survivors is their struggle to articulate their needs. That's why, at Vimukthi, we've adopted a more gradual approach to introducing the Collective Impact Team (CIT). We understand that diving straight into CIT discussions during the initial meetings can be overwhelming. Instead, we prioritize building a strong rapport with the survivor in their first couple of meetings. During these initial interactions, we focus on getting to know them—learning about their background and gauging their current mental and physical health status. We intentionally delay discussions about sensitive topics like STDs/HIV until later meetings, typically around the sixth or seventh session. By then, trust has begun to form between us*

and our peers, making it easier for them to open up and share their concerns. (Rupa, Survivor Leader, name changed to maintain confidentiality)

Illustrating the efficacy of the counseling process provided by the CBO, one survivor described her experience of social stigma from a position of resilience, self-confidence, and optimism: "The world looks at [us], definitely, like [we] are nothing. They always look at [us] like [we're] dirty, there is something not nice about [us]. But that's not true. We have good hearts, we are good people, and we want to show them that they're wrong." [Survivor]

iii. Sensitizing the duty bearers

Sensitizing Duty Bearers - paving the way for survivor-centered advocacy on CBR: The positive response from government officials underscores the value of advocacy and education in facilitating systemic change. "In our work with the Shakti project, we've discovered that sensitizing duty bearers (DBs) to the concept of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) for survivors of sex trafficking is a more effective approach than immediately delving into the processing of survivor applications for welfare schemes. At HELP, we've seen firsthand the impact of this strategy. By first educating DBs on CBR, we lay the groundwork for more meaningful engagement." (Representative of HELP NGO)

In one instance, a community-based organization (CBO) in the Baduria block of the N24P district exemplified the success of this approach. Government officials noted that the CBO's efforts had not only led to increased awareness but also garnered support and cooperation from various line departments. "Our Officials praised the CBO's method of presenting aggregate lists of survivor demands for welfare schemes, highlighting the urgency of addressing these needs. Their consistent engagement and explanation of the CBR approach have fostered a greater degree of sensitivity among block officials. This has resulted in a willingness to prioritize survivor requests and provide necessary support." (Block level Officer, Block Baduria, N24P District)

Upholding Survivor Rights: Navigating Challenges in Victim Compensation Disbursement: Navigating this delicate path requires ongoing advocacy and communication with duty bearers, emphasizing the urgency of timely compensation for survivors. "As part of the Shakti project, we're dedicated to the rehabilitation of 15 survivors, and so far, we've successfully secured approvals for victim compensation for 10 of them. Currently, only three survivors have actually received their compensation @ INR 6 lakh per survivor. However, the disbursement process has been disappointingly slow. This low rate of entitlement fulfilment is concerning, especially considering the vital support these funds provide to survivors. When we raise these issues with block-level officers, we were met with assurances that the compensation will be disbursed once funds arrive from the district." (Representative of Bansra Birangana Sewa Samiti – Partner NGO, Canning I (S24P District)

Explaining that they were trying their best for the survivor in order to make a connection, one Social Worker said, "Honestly, patience is low because there could be multiple hard days in a row with a survivor and when they are not willing to open up or are unwilling to participate in the discussions, it is hard not to become frustrated with them. However, I believe they want and deserve stability, so I try to keep calm. We too, as project staff feel frustrated when we see progress for a short time and then see that the progress gets halted as a result of the survivor "giving up" on themselves and losing hope in the duty bearers to consider their applications on priority."

The evaluators note that such delays often leave the survivors feeling disillusioned, as they rightfully expect timely access to the support they're entitled to. Perhaps, it's an issue of striking a delicate balance by the grassroots organizations engaged in the implementation of the Shakti project.

The evaluation team also learnt from the project team at Sanjog that efforts to visualize the CBR were linked to campaigns at the national and state levels and linked to livelihoods, ensuring mental health for the survivors, apart from access to housing-related entitlements. In this context, the project team informed the evaluators that campaigns were held along with the Partners and a joint letter too had been submitted to the office of the Chief Minister of West Bengal for policy interventions.

Empowering Engagement: Survivor Participation in Follow-Up Meetings for Enhanced Sensitization: PRI representatives as duty bearers have been found to support the involvement of the survivors in their case management. "We are fully open to the survivors joining the follow-up meetings, along with the local CBOs/partners. In fact, their presence and deliberations during these meetings could possibly help us to better understand their vulnerabilities and challenges. TPCM, in the long run, might emerge as an effective strategy in sensitizing many of the line department officials for prioritising the requests of survivors." (PRI representatives, Basirhat Block, N24P district)

Sub-optimal sensitisation realised among Panchayat representatives as key duty bearers: It may be pertinent to note that while community engagements (along with the members of PRIs, as duty bearers) have been initiated, the evaluators find that these do not appear to have created the desired level of sensitisation among the grassroots duty bearers. As shared with the evaluation team by the CBOs, there are instances of the use of stigma-laden phrases to refer to particular cases by the duty bearers (both at the Panchayat and the block level).

iv. Livelihoods promotion

Building the capacity of survivors to 'envision' their options and opportunities through a sense of agency has significantly empowered the survivors to make decisions for their lives. The evaluation team noted in its discussion with the survivors and their leaders that survivors value the support for livelihoods through the project. "For us, this is more essential to our successful reintegration than family acceptance, as our abilities to be economically independent and self-sufficient has the power to protect us from rejections by our families and the society," says a survivor leader from Canning 1.

Survivor-Centric Financial Empowerment: Social Worker's Agenda

The evaluation team also observed in its discussions with several Social Workers that apart from being one of the key project staff for other components of the project, they have an appreciable sense of their responsibilities to quickly enable the survivors in their journeys of being financially independent. As put by a Social Worker, "Once the survivors have reached the stage of mental stability and acceptance then the next step is a livelihood. "As a social worker managing several self-help groups (SHGs) of survivors, I've witnessed the transformative power of financial empowerment firsthand. In my role within the Shakti project of Sanjog, aimed at community-based rehabilitation of survivors of sex trafficking, one of my key focuses has been on facilitating access to subsidized credit from banking institutions for these groups. Over the years, I've seen remarkable progress within the SHGs I oversee. Out of the 14 groups under my guidance, nearly 10 have shown significant improvement in their financial behaviour.

Echoed in a similar vein by a survivor leader, “through diligent efforts and advocacy by the CBO, many members of our group have successfully obtained subsidized loans through government channels and are now consistently repaying their EMIs.”

However, the evaluation team found that there remains a crucial challenge with some groups, who still struggle to improve their financial habits. Members from these groups often utilize loan funds to repay high-interest debts incurred through informal channels, where rates can soar as high as 22 percent. It's evident that more work is needed to address these issues and guide these groups towards sustainable financial practices. The grassroots-level project staff and the survivor leaders appear to be geared up for a long haul, before the complete transformation on the economic front lives of the survivors. As put by a social worker, “Being dedicated to the empowerment and rehabilitation of survivors, I recognize the importance of continuing to support these groups on their journey toward financial independence. Through ongoing education, counseling, and community engagement, I remain committed to helping all survivors achieve economic stability and autonomy.”

Evidence of forming SHGs of survivors spread across multiple villages/panchayats: The evaluation team gathers that the Sanjog team with its internal expertise on livelihoods and women's economic empowerment and having established networks with the SRLM (both at the district and state levels) managed to navigate the rather arduous path of eventually forming SHGs of geographically dispersed survivors (across a block/multiple blocks) as a special case. As most of the engagements under Shakti concentrated at the block level (in terms of meeting the duty bearers, follow-ups on applications, etc.), the Sanjog team realised there is a strong need for action at the place where the survivors were residing. An obvious approach (drawing inspiration from the national and state rural livelihoods missions), the Shakti project sought to form Self self-help groups (SHGs) for the survivors. Noting that the registration of an SHG generally requires women from the same area to come together and that the survivors were from different Gram Panchayats or even blocks within a given district there was indeed a challenge to constitute such groups. This obviously is indicative of such efforts as precedence for organising the survivors in other locations.

Group or individual businesses for survivors: trying to solve the puzzle

Based upon discussions with Sanjog's team, the evaluators gathered that till about a year back, group business was the preferred channel for promoting livelihoods. Of the six (6) groups that had evinced the initial interest, four (4) had actually begun, of which one (1) had dropped off. In fact, a business competition was held in 2021, during which several SHGs presented their business plans. As a result of this, the top three business plans were awarded grants for group-based livelihoods. Apart from boosting the confidence of the members of these groups, it was assumed by the project that this may act as a trigger for encouraging the other survivors/and survivors' SHGs to develop similar strong business plans. Incidentally, some of the winning SHGs from the referred business competition, also reportedly managed additional credit from the banks. However, observations at the field level by the evaluation team in Baduria (where a group-level activity was being done by the survivors on textile printing) suggest that group activities have largely been unsuccessful. Infrequent meetings amongst members attributed to long distances from their residences, lack of clear business plans, marketing strategy, and inefficient management of finances are some of the factors for the observed sub-optimality in the context of group-based livelihoods. Many survivors have started small ventures of their own mainly dealing with selling jewellery, garments, etc. within the local communities. Earnings for such survivors have also been small, pointing to limited market linkages.

A recent development at the project management level at Sanjog in the context of group-based livelihoods is to form groups based on the homogeneity of products, even though the members may be widely dispersed. This is based on their assumption that product homogeneity is likely to foster group cohesiveness in pursuing common livelihood interests, even though they may be geographically dispersed. The evaluation team understands that such product groups are being currently done by Sanjog to push the group-level economic activities to the next level. That could perhaps help set up micro-production units and/or link them in a supply chain for attending to specific stages in the process of production of the final product. On this note, the evaluation team is of the view that challenges of aggregation and efficiently creating a value chain for each product would need to be clearly dealt with before the above plan is rolled out at the ground level.

Skilling for livelihoods

While the focus on livelihoods is of recent vintage in the Shakti project, it is too early to comment on the efficiency of this component, as part of the CBR approach based on this component, the evaluators noted a key element missing in the livelihoods component – i.e. vocational training of survivors. As shared by a group of survivors in Hasnabad and Canning 1, “While counseling is important to help us in learning to fight stigma, we need money to be economically independent. It would be helpful if we could be equipped through short term courses on skills and means to earn our livelihoods.”

Mediating role of markets less attended

A key factor limiting the growth of either individual and/or group businesses started by the survivors has been a relatively low priority given to integrating the mediating role of markets for best price discovery for the products sold by the enterprises set by these survivors – either individually or collectively. Discussions with the block-level government officials in N24P and S24P districts suggest that efforts were made to allow spaces for putting up stalls at the local arts and crafts or food festivals organized by the government at the block and/or district level. To this extent, some efforts towards exposure to wider markets have been there. However, the moot point, as shared by these block officials with the evaluation team, has been the lack of rigour by the supporting CBOs in ensuring quality controls of the products produced and/or traded by the survivors (individually and/or collectively). Secondly, the scale of production has been relatively small.

Further, the discussions by the evaluation team with some of the survivors who had their own enterprises (selling ready-made garments at a retail level or selling artificial jewelry in the local villages and semi-urban pockets) indicate that they were willing to put in more money in the initial round, only if there is an assured market. The inducement to invest has clearly been limited by the size of the market.

v. TPCM & FEP – recently introduced elements

The Tri-Party Case Management (TPCM), as shared by Sanjog's project team was a new element that was brought into the current phase of the Shakti project in 2022 and the need for TPCM essentially came from the partners of the Shakti project.

While Sanjog added TPCM to the Shakti project, the project team gathered subsequently that the partners lacked adequate clarity on the mechanism for operationalizing the TPCM at the ground level. The initial momentum could only end up as big meetings or events (with one such meeting held in November 2023, as shared by Sanjog's project team), with understandably no meaningful discussion on the needs and planning for each survivor.

Importantly, the project team is aware that this component is still building up. The evaluators do not have any evidence to establish the effectiveness of the TPCM approach

and how the survivors may be leveraging this approach to engage with the duty bearers to demand their rights, submit their applications, and the follow-ups.

Is the TPCM really a departure?

For the evaluation team, the TPCM, however, does not indicate any significant shift in the mechanism followed at present, whereby the survivor and/or the survivor leaders, along with the Social Worker, all of whom shared with the evaluators that they do visit the duty bearers' offices with some intervals to understand the status of their applications. Conceptually, TPCM appears to be a normative approach, where the duty bearers would be actually engaged with the survivors in first understanding their needs and then consider the speedy processing of the applications submitted by the survivors. The evaluators are of the view that given that the local administrative processes are already struggling to manage with limited staff (across line departments), expectations that a duty bearer (say a BDO, Joint BDO, Block level Medical Officer, or even a PRI representative at the block level) would be able to spare that much time to devote on each case does not appear pragmatic. Perhaps, some more thought by the project team on sharpening the envisaged mechanism of rolling out the TPCM could allay such apprehensions and position the TPCM as a more grounded approach for CBR.

On the other hand, the evaluators take note of the micro-level community platforms being planned by the project for rolling out the TPCM. An important aspect of the TPCM is to also bring in the Gram Panchayats, as *in situ* duty bearers, to include the needs of survivors in the GP-level annual planning processes. Clearly, this is a point to reckon with, particularly in the context of decentralized planning wherein the *Para Baithaks* (gram sabhas) is an important platform for micro-level planning, that offers a window of opportunity to get the demands of the survivors included at the Gram Panchayat level per se.

Relevance of local CBOs/NGOs as Third Parties in the TPCM

"We have been considering the demand for social welfare schemes for survivors of sex trafficking, as and when these come to our attention. However, handling a single case, when brought by survivor leaders or a survivor herself may be difficult for us. Just as the local CBO/NGO has been putting up consolidated requests to us for housing, sanitation, and GR of free ration of 12 kg of rice per month, we would prefer that future applications under the TPCM come to us through the local CBO/NGO Partner. Block-level government official, Basanti Block (adjacent to Canning I block in S24P district)

Family Engagement Planning

Importantly, acknowledging the stigma faced by the families of the survivors, the Shakti project has of late also introduced an element of Family Engagement Planning (FEP). Speaking of family engagements, the project team of Shakti at Sanjog shared that "the introduction of FEP is also on account of sub-optimal support from the family members themselves for the survivors". The FEP, as noted by the evaluators may be seen as an additionality within the mental health component of the Shakti project that has recently been introduced under the Shakti project. For the evaluation team, this indeed has been a critical element that has been brought in, noting that the preceding engagements by the project had largely focused on the duty bearers, frontline workers, CBOs, and the families (as being situated closest to the survivors) had not been focused hitherto. However, the evaluators do not have any evidence from the field to comment on the efficacy of the FEP as a critical element of CBR. On the other hand, discussions with the project team at Sanjog show that the operational part of the FEP does not appear to have been adequately transferred to the partners and the CBOs.

It is also not clear whether the project had done any base work or whether the survivors might actually be open to discussing their trauma and needs in the presence of their family members. [The rationale of FEP thus needs to be expressed clearly to the partners/CBO, who *inter alia* may thus build capacities of the survivor leaders \(and the social workers, too\) to effectively roll out the FEP at the ground level.](#)

vi. Reflections on Partnerships

Equal partnership sans accountability

An important element of the organogram of the Shakti project was the challenges that came along with the equal partnerships model that intended to accelerate the process of implementation and keep the transaction costs low for all the parties.

Discussions with the partners such as PAT (a consortium of CBOs from the N24P district) and some other partners such as BBSS suggest that the projects had their own stories of highs and lows in terms of partnerships. While the equality principle allowed flexibility and space to the partners for project implementation, for the evaluators, the partners of Sanjog somewhere had the expectation that since Sanjog was the lead agency engaging with the donor, it was the latter that had the main accountability. Somewhere down the line, the evaluators sensed that there were tensions and undercurrents in the relationship between a given partner and Sanjog. The evaluation team learned from one of the partner's representatives (from PAT) that while local-level advocacy and media engagement were done by the partners, the Sanjog team, in one instance, even did not proactively share the publication of a given media coverage on the local success of the project.

Issues of delayed releases of funds (as voiced by several CBOs whom the evaluators met) have been a key reason for keeping the frontline workers adequately motivated. AS shared by the heads of the CBOs particularly, "We have limited working capital at our disposal. Delays in disbursement of project funds can stall several activities at the ground level." On the other hand, the evaluation team understands that Sanjog's concern has been that the equality principles have been without corresponding accountability from the partners.

All partners, namely Sanjog, PAT, BBSS, and HELP had defined roles. Sanjog's role was mainly confined to technical support (domain knowledge, developing capacity-building modules and knowledge products, technology support, monitoring, and advocacy). With its established credentials as a technical agency, a think tank that has been engaging both across multiple states in India and advising global forums on the subject, Sanjog provided the same in the form of CIT, IEC material, monitoring tools, MIS support, and modules on building leadership capacities of survivors and basic training to the CBOs for implementation.

The implementation was the exclusive responsibility of the other three partners, namely HELP in AP), PAT (through its 8 consortium members in N24P), and BBSS in the S24P district. The evaluation team learnt from Sanjog's project team that it was stretched between managing their own roles (of technical assistance, including monitoring) and the implementation roles (which were exclusive to the partners). This obviously had demands on their time and management of resources.

CBO partners for program implementation and their roles

Leveraging the geographical spread of consortium members and the *in situ* presence of the CBOs in a given block has been a major gain for the partnership model. For instance, under the Kaarya initiative on livelihoods, started in 2022 to initiate group-level business for the SHGs (of survivors situated across more than one block such as Baduria) there were

challenges in terms of organising the business through widely dispersed members in other blocks. With CBOs as the members of the consortium placed in different blocks, the matter was taken up by the consortium members together, deliberated upon and it was agreed that the joint business activity (comprising even 2-3 SHG members staying in close proximity) could be initiated.

Partnership with local NGOs has helped the Shakti project to strategically leverage government initiatives (such as in Andhra Pradesh, wherein local Secretariats had been set up by the government, aimed at enhancing public service delivery). The Shakti project (through its local partner HELP) deftly capitalized on the opportunity by engaging with the Secretariat staff, effectively communicating their services, and involving them in community activities. This proactive approach not only facilitated a deeper understanding of the program's objectives among government officials but also fostered a collaborative relationship, thereby strengthening the local-level advocacy efforts and access to welfare programs for the survivors.

Advocacy through Partners

Sanjog's project team shared with the evaluators that the Partners were also responsible for district-level engagements for advocacy on CBR. However, the evaluators observed that such engagement with the district administration or other partners was largely missing. Even if it existed, no relevant information was shared by the Partners with the evaluation team, nor these were referred by the partners during the discussions with the evaluation team.

So, while the Sanjog team has engaged with the state-level line departments and at the national level with ILFAT (Integrated Leadership Forum Against Trafficking) seeking to influence the NITI Aayog on the CBR approach, and implementation was being taken care of by the Partners/CBOs at the block level, the district level advocacy appears to be a casualty in the process.

The evaluation notes that since members of the Shakti team from Sanjog are still required by the other partners (and CBOs) to engage at the ground level on implementation issues, the envisaged decentralised approach of project implementation has not been fully efficient.

7. S2C2 : Emerging perspectives

The evaluation team suggests the following actions:

1. Stop (S):

- Hand over CIT and Case Management to CBOs: Transition CIT and case management responsibilities to CBOs, empowering them to manage survivor data and support services effectively. Provide necessary training and resources to CBO staff for seamless integration.
- Empower Survivors in Managing Mental Health: Once survivors progress beyond trauma, encourage self-management of mental health by facilitating direct access to psychologists and peer support networks through platforms like WhatsApp. Social workers can step back from active support in this area.
- Enable Survivor Empowerment in Engaging with Duty Bearers: Leverage technology like the Uttar app to empower survivors in monitoring their status regarding government schemes and entitlements. Social workers can gradually phase out follow-up with duty bearers as survivors take control of their entitlements.

2. Change (C):

- Enhance Advocacy Efforts: Increase awareness of the Shakti program among duty bearers through regular awareness drives via print and social media. Ensure alignment between advocacy efforts and ground realities to bridge any existing gaps.
- Establish Feedback Mechanisms for Partners: Implement regular feedback mechanisms for partners to enhance transparency and ensure alignment with common objectives. Foster a culture of collaboration and communication among stakeholders for improved project outcomes.
- Ensure Accountability in Partnerships: Strengthen accountability mechanisms within partnerships by defining clear roles and responsibilities. Establish performance metrics and conduct regular evaluations to monitor progress and address any issues proactively.

3. Continue (C):

- Support and Monitor SHGs: Provide ongoing support and monitoring to SHGs, focusing on business plan execution and sustainability. Strengthen SHGs as a platform for economic empowerment and peer support among survivors.
- Advance TPCM Implementation: Continue implementing TPCM for effective case management, ensuring survivors receive comprehensive support. Monitor and evaluate TPCM effectiveness over time, making necessary adjustments for continuous improvement.
- Leverage FEP for Survivor Welfare: Strengthen implementation of FEP to address survivors' needs and promote family engagement in the rehabilitation process. Provide training and resources to partners and CBOs for effective FEP implementation.
- Sustain Engagement with SRLM: Maintain engagement with SRLM for livelihood promotion and capacity building of survivors as producers and entrepreneurs. Explore opportunities for collaboration and resource mobilization to support survivors' economic empowerment.
- Address Social Stigma: Continue mental health counseling to address individual and social stigma experienced by survivors. Empower survivor leaders to

provide peer support and collaborate with psychologists to ensure comprehensive support.

4. Start (S):

- **Restore Dedicated Legal Support:** Reintroduce dedicated legal support previously provided by Taftesh to address survivors' legal needs effectively. Collaborate with legal experts and organizations to ensure survivors receive necessary legal assistance.
- **Advocate for CBR Approach:** Advocate for a Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approach at the state and district levels consistently, supported by performance metrics and evidence of impact. Engage with stakeholders to promote policy change and institutionalize CBR principles. Moving forward, there is potential to expand this pilot project to other blocks, with the assurance of support from local authorities.
- **Facilitate Market Linkages:** Establish linkages with markets through duty bearers and online platforms to support survivors' livelihoods. Foster partnerships with market actors to create opportunities for survivors to access markets and sell their products or services.
- **Certify Training Programs:** Work towards certifying training programs offered by the project in collaboration with government institutions. Enhance the employability of survivors by providing them with recognized certifications and skills that meet industry standards.

8. Recommendations

1. Essentials of S2C2

- i. **Technical Support and Maintenance:** Establish a sustainable plan for maintaining and updating the Sanyukt app and Uttar app over the long term. This includes ensuring regular software updates, troubleshooting support, and user training to maximize the effectiveness and functionality of the apps in field situations. Mobilizing additional resources and training an in-house team of software experts can help address technical backstopping challenges and ensure optimal utilization of the apps.
- ii. **Enhancing Survivor Leadership:** Continue to foster survivor leadership within the program. Provide training and support to survivor leaders to enhance their leadership skills and effectiveness in supporting their peers for survivors to develop leadership skills, engage with peers, and take on responsibilities in case management and peer support.
- iii. **Collaboration and Communication:** Improve communication and collaboration between project partners, CBOs, and the IT team to ensure smooth functioning of the Sanyukt app and other project components. This may involve regular meetings, updates on technical issues, and coordination efforts to address challenges promptly.
- iv. **Enhancing Sensitization Among Grassroots Duty Bearers:** Intensify efforts to sensitize grassroots duty bearers, including Panchayat representatives, to the needs and rights of survivors. Develop targeted sensitization programs and awareness campaigns aimed at addressing stigma and discrimination at the local level. Provide training and capacity-building initiatives to equip grassroots duty bearers with the knowledge and skills to effectively support survivors and prioritize their requests for assistance.

- v. **Addressing Delays in Victim Compensation Disbursement:** Advocate for timely and expedited disbursement of victim compensation to survivors, highlighting the importance of these funds in supporting survivors' rehabilitation and recovery. Work closely with block-level officers and relevant authorities to address bottlenecks and streamline the disbursement process.
- vi. **Continued Psychosocial Support:** Recognize and prioritize the importance of psychosocial support for survivors in their recovery journey. Ensure that the Shakti project continues to provide comprehensive psychosocial support tailored to the individual needs of survivors. This support should address issues related to stigma, discrimination, and mental health, empowering survivors to navigate their pathways to recovery with confidence and resilience.
- vii. **Support for Individual and Group Businesses:** Offer tailored support and guidance to survivors interested in starting individual or group-based businesses. Provide assistance in developing clear business plans, marketing strategies, and financial management skills to ensure the viability and success of these ventures. Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation among survivors while addressing challenges such as limited market linkages and inefficient management of finances.
- viii. **Product Grouping and Value Chain Development:** Explore the concept of forming groups based on product homogeneity to foster group cohesiveness and enhance collective economic activities among survivors. Develop strategies for efficiently creating value chains for each product group, including micro-production units and supply chain linkages. Address challenges related to aggregation and market access to maximize the impact of group-based livelihood initiatives.
- ix. **Market Integration and Quality Control:** Prioritize the integration of markets into the livelihoods activities of survivors to facilitate better price discovery and market access for their products. Work with local authorities and organizations to create opportunities for survivors to showcase and sell their products at art and crafts festivals or other community events. Implement quality control measures to ensure the production of high-quality goods that meet market standards and consumer expectations.
- x. **Scale-Up and Market Expansion:** Expand efforts to scale up individual and group businesses started by survivors by identifying opportunities for market expansion and diversification. Explore partnerships with local businesses, retailers, and online platforms to increase the reach and visibility of survivor-made products. Provide ongoing support and mentorship to survivors to help them navigate challenges and capitalize on growth opportunities in the market.
- xi. **Continued Financial Empowerment:** Maintain a focus on financial empowerment and independence as key components of survivor rehabilitation and reintegration. Continue to facilitate access to subsidized credit and financial resources for survivors through partnerships with banking institutions and government channels. Support survivors in developing sustainable financial habits and practices to improve their long-term economic stability and autonomy.
- xii. **Capacity Building for Partners and CBOs:** Provide ongoing capacity-building support to partner organizations and CBOs to effectively implement project activities and initiatives. This should include training on TPCM, FEP, advocacy, and other relevant topics to enhance the skills and competencies of frontline workers and project staff. Foster a collaborative learning environment where partners can share best practices, lessons learned, and challenges encountered to continuously improve project implementation.
- xiii. **Streamline Decision-Making Processes:** Streamline decision-making processes within the partnership model to ensure efficient and effective project implementation. Establish clear communication channels and protocols for

- decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution to address issues and challenges in a timely manner. Encourage open dialogue and feedback mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability among all stakeholders.
- xiv. **Monitor and Evaluate Progress:** Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, measure impact, and identify areas for improvement. Regularly collect and analyse data on project activities, outcomes, and beneficiary feedback to inform decision-making and adaptation of strategies. Conduct periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness and relevance of project interventions and make necessary adjustments as needed.

2. Addressing gaps on priority & suggested strategies

- i. **Advocacy of CBR model:** This report is on the CBR model of the Shakti project, and the evaluators perceive there is a need for a wider implementation of the model by the government. Promoting the CBR model at the state level can foster collaborative partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, and other stakeholders involved in anti-trafficking efforts. This can create synergies and ensure a coordinated response to the needs of survivors across different sectors and levels of government.
- ii. **Promotion of survivor-centric program:** A major hitch in the full realisation of the response from the duty bearers at an intermediate outcome level has been the absence of any specific program for the survivors as well as limited allocations from the district level (against a general social protection scheme). This points out to existing gaps at policy and program levels. With a near absence of any administrative advisory for prioritised processing of applications by survivors for social protection, the Shakti project's outcomes on access to social protection may be seen as a constrained optimisation exercise with moderate results.
- iii. **Aligning expectations with realities:** Set realistic expectations for the functionality and impact of the Uttar app, particularly regarding its ability to influence duty bearers' responses based on survivors' ratings. Recognize the limitations of the current governance structures and rating mechanisms and explore alternative approaches to advocacy and engagement with duty bearers.
- iv. **Technology:** Updation of technology, including assured technical backstopping (at the backend) for facilitation and monitoring to be done on priority.
- v. **Establishment of Market Linkages and Support Services:** Forge partnerships with market actors, government agencies, and financial institutions to facilitate market linkages and access to support services for survivor-led livelihood ventures. Provide training and assistance in market research, product development, and business networking.
- vi. **Revitalization and Monitoring of SHGs:** Strengthen support for SHGs by providing training on business planning, marketing, and financial management. Implement regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess SHG performance and provide necessary guidance for improvement.