



---- Final Report ----

**Evaluation of UN Women Fund for Gender Equality Economic and Political  
Empowerment Catalytic Grant Programme:**

**“Dalit Women’s Livelihoods Accountability Initiative”  
India**

Executed by Gender at Work in partnership with Dalit Stree Sakthi (DSS) through Mitra Service Society (MSS)

By

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## List of Abbreviation and Acronyms

AP	Andhra Pradesh
BDO	Block Development Officer/Officer
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DMS	Dalit Mahila Samiti
DSS	Dalit Stthree Sakhti
DSSU	Dalit Stthree Shramik Union
DWLAI	Dalit Women's Livelihoods Accountability Initiative
FA	Field Assistant
FGE	Fund for Gender Equality
G@W	Gender at Work
GE	Gender Equality
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Rights
KI	Key Informants
Log-frame	Logical Framework
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MGNREGA/S	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/scheme
MKSS	Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sanghantana
N	Number
NCPRI	National Campaign for Peoples Rights to Information
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RBM	Results-Based Management
RG	Reference Group (Evaluation)
RS	Rozgar Sewak
RTI	Right to Information Act
SC	Schedule Caste
SRO	Sub-regional Office (SRO)
SSK	Sahjani Siksha Kendra
ST	Schedule Tribe
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
US	United States
US\$	US Dollar
%	Percent

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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **The Fund for Gender Equality**

UN Women multi-donor Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) was launched in 2009 to fast-track commitments to gender equality. It supports and advances women's economic and political empowerment at local, national and regional levels through the provision of grants – provided on a competitive basis - to government agencies and civil society organizations to transform legal commitments into tangible actions that have a positive impact on the lives of women and girls around the world. Its mandate seeks to further the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and regional agreements such as the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Belen do Para, among others.

In its inaugural grant-making cycles (2009-2010), the Fund for Gender Equality awarded US\$37.5 million to 40 programmes in 35 countries: 16 Economic Empowerment Programme Grants and 24 Political Empowerment Programme Grants. The awarded programmes reflected a range of interventions designed to advance gender equality commitments, laws and policies. 27 of them are geared to “catalyze” processes resulting in such commitments (capacities of gender equality advocates, rights holders, duty bearers, women's movements, legal advocacy and frameworks, creations of laws, gender mainstreaming, etc) in countries where these commitments do not yet exist. These 27 FGE Economic and Political Empowerment Catalytic Programmes began in January 2010 for a two year period.

The Fund for Gender Equality is committed to learning from and with its grantees, and seeks to serve as a model for how to fast-track and implement gender equality laws and policies focused on economic and political empowerment around the world. As such, towards the completion of the two year cycle of the catalytic grant process, the Fund decided to undertake five evaluations covering nine grant programmes. The objective of these evaluations were to track, assess, and widely share the lessons learned from pioneering grant programmes and to contribute to global know-how in the field of gender equality, including best practices towards achieving MDGs, BPA and CEDAW, and other global and regional agreements.

### **Evaluation of the Fund's “Dalit Women's Livelihoods Accountability Initiative”**

In India, the Catalytic Programme “Dalit Women's Livelihoods Accountability Initiative (DWLAI)” was selected to be evaluated. The DWLAI is a two year US\$ 492,000 programme implemented in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Andhra Pradesh (AP), implemented by two non-governmental organizations: Gender at Work and Dalit Sthree Sakthi (DSS) through Mitra Service Society (MSS). The programme seeks to improve Dalit women's economic conditions by improving their leadership and capacity to claim their rights to employment as provided by a recently instituted national employment guarantee act.

In India men and women have equal constitutional rights, which are safeguarded by various legislative regulations and promoted through different welfare measures and ratification of international conventions. Despite these, women, specifically those who are particularly marginalized, are still lagging much behind men, especially in exercising their rights as per the provisions made in policies and laws. This is the case, for example, with regards to Dalit women's ability to claim their rights as provided by specific policies and laws such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/scheme (MNREGA/S) of 2005. This Act ensures 100 days' paid employment to each rural household per year within a periphery of five kilometers of the applicants' residence with 33% reservation for women at equal wage between men and women. The Act also includes a provision for safe worksite facilities such as providing drinking water, shade, childcare and healthcare to workers.

The MNREGA is a path breaking Act, which legalized the right to work for the first time in India; it guarantees job security for unorganized sector in the rural areas and is a rights-based demand driven Act. This means that the work is given when work is demanded. However, many of the people in rural areas, specifically the most needy Dalit communities and more specifically the Dalit women and scheduled castes were found not to be demanding the work due to lack of knowledge about the provisions of the Act and unaware of information about how to claim

the entitlements.

Therefore, in order to remedy this lack of knowledge of their entitlements and basic rights and subsequently to increase Dalit women's access to claim paid employment, the DWLAI was developed and funded by FGE and subsequently implemented in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The evaluation of DWLAI programme was conducted from 15th September 2011 to 31st January 2012. This report presents findings on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and potential impact of the programme.

## Findings

The evaluation found that the Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative supported by the Fund for Gender Equality has contributed substantially to bringing about changes in the lives of marginalised Dalit women in eight districts of Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Due to DWLAI thousands of Dalit women are more empowered socially, economically and politically. They are able to exercise their rights to claim the benefits provided by the very important and progressive Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The DWLAI has shown how a very important job guarantee scheme by the Government of India can be implemented to give access to the most marginalized women even in conservative rural settings. It draws clear attention for the very critical role that NGOs, grounded in local realities, can play to ensure that government acts do deliver their promise. This requires not only increasing the knowledge and outreach to marginalized women, but requires utilizing political will at every level of state machinery. It requires the sensitization of local level authorities as well as developing the political strength of marginalized women to claim their entitlements.

Due to the **effective organizing and management strategies of the DWLAI** regarding a critical issue for low income women – economic empowerment – impressive achievements in Dalit women's participation in MGNREGA processes has been garnered. Indeed, not only have the programme beneficiaries increased their access to work entitlements, they have also increased control and decision-making power over their earnings. They command greater respect and authority in their homes and in their communities. The DWLAI has worked to roll out the features of the Act – Job Cards and bank accounts in women's names – that are particularly important in the Indian rural context where there are stark inequalities between men and women.

They have also gone beyond the imperatives of the MGNREGA to mobilize and organize Dalit women in unions to become a political force that can demand MGNREGA and other entitlements. Dalit women have also increased their political clout through collective organizing. The unions are able to demand work and they serve as a pressure group to meet other demands relating to MGNREGA. Indeed, DWLAI **worked to build the voice of low income Dalit women** by encouraging them to play an active role in advocating for their rights. This very act gives them voice in local administration and empowers them in the processes of local governance. It demonstrates to local authorities that low income Dalit women's perspectives and needs must be considered in development processes.

Women's access to work which ensures wage parity, as mandated by MGNREGA, is very important for **changing social attitudes towards women** and the important monetary and non-monetary contributions they make to rural households and to rural communities that has been largely invisible. The evaluation found that the DWLAI programme has gone beyond the mandate of the MGNREGA to get low-income Dalit women supervisory (Mate) positions on the MGNREGA work sites. The technical training they have provided in addition to the pressure they placed on MGNREGA officials to hire trained women in these capacities is a very important breakthrough for women. It has changed perceptions of the leadership roles and capabilities of Dalit women, and has built confidence and self esteem among women. Furthermore it has implicitly challenged rigid caste hierarchies.

The work that DWLAI has done with a **network of partners on the ground is also extremely important to ensure the sustainability of the project**. DWLAI, with funding support from the Fund for Gender Equality, has built the capacity of partner organisations to increase Dalit women's access to MGNREGA entitlements. The partners are better equipped with improved management practices and more expansive networks to better serve and represent Dalit women. Together they can negotiate with MGNREGA and other local government authorities and through developing best practices can provide on-going models to realise the full promise of MGNREGA schemes.

The partners are also more familiar with human rights and gender equality practices that will enhance their effectiveness and leave them better positioned to enable Dalit women to claim and exercise their human rights, address issues of gender inequality, and adopt strategies to facilitate claiming their entitlements. They are also poised to seek other sources of funds to continue their important work.

Another very important contribution from DWLAI is that they have **increased the understanding of duty bearers about Dalit women's issues and concerns regarding this national act**. Due to the sensitization of duty bearers, as well as through using pressure tactics, Dalit women have effectively accessed their MGNREGA related entitlements. By bringing Dalit women into development processes and local governance, they have been able to challenge caste stratification. They are more accepted as equal to other castes in some areas and sitting together with dominant class/caste which was unusual before.

DWLAI has also had a policy impact. They have identified bottle-necks and problem areas in the functioning of the MGNREGA and articulated these concerns to local and state level authorities. This has already led to changes in the way in which the schemes are implemented. They have also **introduced innovations such as developing the "Mate Training module" for Dalit women and piloted the all women work-sites** that can serve as a model in other areas. The site supervisor (Mate) training module prepared under the aegis of the programme is being considered by the UP government for replication and scaling-up.

The **participatory process used in the design, implementation and monitoring of the programme, guided by human rights and gender equality principles** has been very effective and an important contribution of the DWLAI. Using result-based management and action-learning approaches has resulted in DWLAI meeting many of its stated objectives. The development of strong organisational partners was crucial for the success of the project. The **peer learning among partner organizations and the piloting of innovative projects** was very useful for gaining a clear understanding of how to improve MGNREGA to meet the needs of most marginalized women.

DWLAI has proven to be a **cost effective intervention** because the economic gains made by Dalit women exceed the investment made by UN Women Fund for Gender Equality even in a short time span. Furthermore, the likelihood of the programme being sustained is very high. This will translate into dividends for the FGE as, over time, many more low income Dalit women will have access to MGNREGA entitlements. This increases the economic as well as political power of this very economically weak and socially vulnerable group of women which is the principle goal of the Fund for Gender Equality.

## B. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background: The Fund for Gender Equality

UN Women multi-donor Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) was launched in 2009 to fast-track commitments to gender equality. It supports and advances women's economic and political empowerment at local, national and regional levels. Generous contributions of US\$65 million from Spain, US\$3.5 million from Norway, US\$800,000

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