

# Pratibimb

Reflecting the Lives of Didis in the  
Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana program at DAY-NRLM



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सत्यमेव जयते

**Government Of India**



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**Ministry of Rural Development**  
Government of India





स्मृति शरण  
संयुक्त सचिव  
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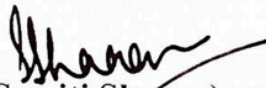
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### Foreword

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) is a testament to the mission's unwavering commitment to truly reach the last mile. Recognising that financial inclusion and economic independence forge the path to a dignified life, it is imperative that no one is left behind. DAY-NRLM along with its State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLM) has consistently iterated on its learnings and experiences with communities that are most excluded and vulnerable.

The dialectic of learning and doing between DAY-NRLM and SRLMs has nurtured an ecosystem that progressively strengthens its economic inclusion programming. To this end, DAY-NRLM's Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana (SAY) programme today accounts for the multidimensionality of poverty and works with rural women across states to achieve inclusive livelihoods for those left behind. This coffee table book is a testament to the lives, joys, resilience and agency of these women who are at various stages of graduating out of multidimensional poverty under SAY.

Maintaining fidelity to DAY-NRLM's economic inclusion programming anchored by community-based organisations, the women's lived realities and experiences in this compilation have foregrounded the need for innovative and consistent strategies for the empowerment of special interest groups. The range of outcomes from work across the country is nothing short of spectacular. Not only have the excluded and vulnerable groups begun their journey of economic ascent, but they are also making a dent in socio-cultural norms that limit their potentialities. We have seen our Didis - office bearers, community cadre and members of community-based organisations - find their voice, choice and agency in this journey of economic empowerment. Our Didis are truly agentic individuals - demanding their rightful dues, making decisions in the community and role-modelling for the next generation of young girls and boys. May their tribe increase!

  
(Smriti Sharan)

# Foreword



# Foreword

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## **Foreword**

Economic inclusion is not only a question of income—it is a question of justice. As John Rawls reminds us, a society is just when its institutions are designed so that those at the margins can genuinely access opportunity. The Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana (SAY) reflects this principle by placing the most vulnerable rural women—those facing intersecting barriers of gender, identity, age, disability, and geography—at the core of its mission.

SAY's design draws from the Graduation Approach: meeting basic needs, reducing vulnerabilities, and nurturing the capacity for hope. For women who have long navigated structural exclusions, the first step toward empowerment is often the rebuilding of confidence and aspiration—the belief that a different future is possible. This programme recognises that dignity, agency, and self-actualisation are as foundational as income in any pathway out of poverty.

Central to this transformation are Changemakers and community cadres, whose work echoes the ethical commitment of mentors in inclusive livelihoods. Rooted within their communities, they accompany women through vision-building, access to entitlements, and livelihood planning, creating the conditions in which potential can unfold. Their relationship with Didis—first tentative, then profoundly trusting—is a quiet testament to what change looks like when justice is practiced, not just promised.

The stories captured in this book remind us that progress is not merely the shift from vulnerability to livelihood—it is the journey from silence to self-belief. By ensuring that no one is left behind, SAY contributes to the larger vision of Viksit Bharat, grounded in inclusion, fairness, and the expansion of human possibility.

(Monika Bhutunguru)







When one of the Didis in the Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana (SAY) program, begins speaking about living as a single mother at Ambassa, Dhalai, she reflects powerfully on taking a principled stand against domestic violence in her own marital life. With her ailing aged mother nodding acquiescence, she says that this will teach her children the value of agency and resilience, of living a life that is filled with both the joys and sorrows of a hard won decision. This Coffee Table book, **Pratibimb**, is an ode to these women encountered during SAY, across states, from all corners of the country.

The eminent French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu says that agency is a production of internal (cognitive/psychological) and external (social) constructs which dialectically reproduce each other. While speaking to women across rural contexts in SAY, this rings true. On one hand, women spoke about an internal shift in their narrative, bolstered by critical capacitation through the program, on the other, they attested to gradual changes in their social ecosystem - within their families and communities. Articulate and agentic women acknowledged having supportive partners enabled them to take decisions on mobility, learning and consent. Older women admitted to have gained in agency over the years.

At the same time, certain communities' own experience/s of injustice (social and economic) gave them common cause with the women in their communities who are similarly marginalised. The fact that many in the immediate ecosystem would have direct experience of being oppressed, whether because of caste, class, sexuality or age, gave the ecosystem some way to relate to women's experience of subordination under the gender system. This opportunity for empathy, if carefully unlocked, can

# Introduction

become a possibility of solidarity when the interlocking links between different forms of injustice and oppression are made clear. **Agency**, it was clear, acted in a relational manner - exerted within relations, limited by relational roles, prone to change with role change. The first and second sections in Pratibimb - **Agency** and **Resilience** - try to capture this complex and changing dynamic between self and other and how this plays out so vividly in women's lives across marginalised contexts as seen in SAY.

The last section focuses on **Joy**, an often overlooked aspect in these women's lives. Beyond the struggles and successes of daily living, exists quiet and not-so quiet moments of unguardedness, rest and leisure. The camaraderie of women Changemakers on the road, a family picture captured on a camera lens, playful banter between two didis in the small group meeting, a mother witnessing her daughter's return from school, rest and leisure interspersed at work.

It is our hope that Pratibimb is able to refocus the gaze on rural women on the margins. Pratibimb literally means 'reflection' and it is our endeavour to mirror the lives of these women as accurately and authentically as possible. Bearing witness to their lives has been a significant responsibility and one that we continue to carry close to our hearts.

# Introduction

Agency





**Renumala Tripura** is a single mother with three children. Her dream is to be able to buy her own land from the income from the piggery portfolio she has started with the Livelihood Support Grant.  
**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**



**Dapmon Khongsdam** with her son at their home in Pynursula. She is increasingly able to spend more time with him owing to her piggery portfolio which she has started under Livelihood Grant. That now is a safety net against the drudgery of daily wage that she was accustomed to.

**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Nginjoplin Khonglam** is a single mother raising two children. Abandoned by her husband two years ago, she was pushed into extreme economic vulnerability. She would often borrow from her family and neighbours. Since joining the program the piggery portfolio she started under Livelihood Grant has relieved her of her worry through a stable income.

**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Anjani Soren** (Changemaker) has been a beacon of hope for women in her village, especially those in need of care and support during and after pregnancy. She considers herself fortunate to be of service to other Didis during their time of need

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



**Mandira Mallik** (L) and **Piyali Nayek Mallik** (R) are sisters-in-law and friends. They have found the confidence to take household decisions since joining the program. They have convinced their husbands to start rebuilding their houses with the additional income from the Livelihood Support Grant.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Safa Sabar** is an elderly person with disabilities, part of the Lodha Sabar community in Jhargram. Even as she waits for the PM-Awas Yojana work to begin, she has been linked with the district administration for support in temporary repair of her roof.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Lusia Kongor** is a senior citizen who has endured the rigor of unrelenting daily wage labour till recently. With the Consumption Support and Livelihood Support Grant, she now finds the confidence to transition to livelihoods that can be undertaken more easily at her age.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



**Icydora Bey** is a single mother to two sons. Widowed at a young age, she is proud that she has been able to provide for her sons through her hard work. She feels assured that she can ensure their higher education with the enhanced income from her piggery and poultry started under Livelihood Grant.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



**Anjima Basumatary** (L) and **Sachila Brahma** (R) are Changemakers who have also trained as Pashu Sakhis. Here they are shown leaving early in the morning for goat vaccination and castration drive in a nearby village. During the day, they managed to cover fifty two households in four hours.  
**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Namita Shabar's** only source of income was earlier limited to saal leaf making, a thankless, tedious job where most of the profits were appropriated by middlemen. Since she has joined SAY, she is being encouraged to tap into her skills of diversifying into more remunerative livelihoods by the Changemakers.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**

“During the household survey, my name was listed under the extremely vulnerable category. At that time, I felt that finally, something good would happen for us.”

Dhapu Bai, Rajasthan





**Komoli Soren** has a herd of twelve goats which she has grown in over two years from the three goats she received under Livelihood Support Grant. Her increasing financial solvency has given her the confidence to take quick decisions in the household - when her goat shed collapsed due to incessant rains, she was able to swiftly undertake the necessary repairs without worrying about where the money would come from.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



**Sefali Sarkar** earlier identified as a single mother who had been abandoned and lived off land that had been borrowed from her father. Today, she is earning from produce that she cultivates in that very land and from the goats she has received as part of Livelihood Grant. She can now contribute to her family and proudly says that her land is not borrowed but earned.

**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



**Bithorai Barman** has an extended livelihoods portfolio, with the support of SAY, including piggery, silk worm rearing and duck rearing. She wants to diversify into pisciculture as well. This entrepreneurial spirit and technical knowledge has earned her the respect of her entire family.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



**Phikir Khonglam** is a single woman with no family members. Her kitchen garden is her pride and joy, along with being a source of income and nutrition. Others in her village come to learn from her.  
**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Larisha Lyngdoh** (Changemaker) knows four languages including Hindi and English. She is proud of her ability to speak so many languages and believes this helps her communicate better with the Didis and government officials making her especially efficient at her work.

**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Pepsi M Sangma** dreams of building a pucca house. In the past two years her family gathered meagre savings from daily wage labour and were only able to lay the foundation. She is confident that as the SAY program helps her earn a better livelihood through the piggery which she started under Livelihood Support Grant she will soon put up walls and complete making her home.

**Umling, Tura, Meghalaya**



**Shimtilang Lyngdoh**, is a twenty-two-year-old mother of two children, and also takes care of her ailing father. She and her husband engaged in irregular daily wage labour but found it difficult to meet their needs. While she already had a small kitchen garden, Agri-Nutri garden training along with her existing knowledge has led to her growing over twelve types of vegetables, ensuring her family is never hungry.  
**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Santona Momin** (Changemaker) goes beyond her role and uses her own resources and time to help support Didis in need, especially during medical emergencies as she strongly believes in the vision of resilience under SAY. For herself she dreams of opening her bakery, to prepare for which she is running a local school's canteen.

**Umling, Tura, Meghalaya**



**Minu Malik** beams proudly speaking about her ability to grow vegetables in the dry summer heat of Jhargram. She smiles and says that she is better than her husband at farming and has learnt it all herself.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Sajani Sabar** married of her own will before she turned eighteen. Mother of two children, she and her husband work as daily wage labourers. They did not have Aadarh or Ration cards but after she joined SAY she got them made and now has access to government schemes.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**

“I invested some of my Consumption Grant to open a samosa shop; it was my dream. When I am free, I watch recipes on YouTube on my neighbour’s phone to find new snacks I can offer.”

Sonali Ray, Assam





**Romita Meska**, a Changemaker under SAY, covers households spread over two hills. She walks to visit these households at least thrice a week, walking over fifteen to twenty kilometers, crossing rivers and hillocks. While initially she had felt unsure of her ability to do the work she persevered and now looks forward to it. For her, the Didis have become her family.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**

**Hemari Tripura** conducted the Household Selection process for the SAY program, her first job. While she was met with resistance she saw the condition of the households and believed in the transformative ability of the program. She was determined to become a Changemaker and now she wants to work further for those who are marginalised.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**





**Mukta Mahakur** and her husband are childless. Due to their age they were worried about how they would survive as they grow older. Mukta opened a 'pakora shop' at the village centre which has now become a hub for socialising. It is not just a source of income but also a source of social interactions and happiness for the couple.

**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Kalpona Das** was unsure she would be able to do goatery, she chose the livelihood with apprehension as she had never practiced it. But she soon realised she is a quick learner and now has three healthy goats which has given her self confidence. She is grateful to her Changemaker and Pashu Sakhi for their support and training.

**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



**Tararani Shit** (L) and **Kalpana Shit** (R) are Changemakers and sisters. They became Changemakers under SAY to support vulnerable Didis transform their lives. But they are also transforming their own lives under the program. They enrolled for higher secondary examination and are now determined to become graduates.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Laxmi Hembrom** is a Changemaker who began her journey in SAY with the Household Selection process. Initially she found Didis unwilling to talk and lacked trust. With patience and regular visits, she won their trust. Her transformative work led to her travelling to Ranchi and Delhi, to speak about community leadership in creating socio-economic inclusion for the most vulnerable.

**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Budhni Sabar** comes from the Sabar community, a denotified tribe. Her family lives on a hill, isolated from the main village. Irregular daily wage labour was their only source of income. Along with her livelihood and income, her confidence has grown through her active participation in SHG, a space for solidarity and sharing with other women in her village.  
**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Kanubala Tripura** (R) is a single mother, with three children, who is also looking after her own ailing mother. She took a principled stand to walk out of her marriage owing to domestic violence and believes her children will learn important lessons in dignity and self-respect from her life choice.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**



**Matangini Mallik** (Changemaker - R) is supporting Dulali Mallik to access government schemes. Matangini herself used to work as a farm labourer waking up at 3 a.m. to go to work, often going without meals. She understands the struggles of Didis and is determined to support them for an economically secure future.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Januki Reang's** family were landless and dependent on Jhum cultivation. Their house is positioned on a hill slope, reflecting the precarity of their lives eked out from daily wage labour and subsistence farming. Building her own goat shed to house her goats was a first step towards securing more stable foundations for her own family.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**

Resilience





**Gurupriya Mahata** (L) Changemaker visits **Sarbani Sabar** (R) Didi to understand the reason for her absence from Small Group Meetings. Through targeted household visits and intensive handholding Changemakers ensure that no Didi is left behind. These visits also provide an opportunity to understand the daily struggles that Didis are facing and strengthen their overall psycho-social development.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Sajani Shabar** (R) Didi shares her status of access to government schemes with Changemaker **Pramila Mahata** (L). Changemakers like Pramila enable Didis to access government schemes as often due to lack of literacy chronically vulnerable households are unaware of the benefits available to them. They support Didis by providing information and the necessary facilitation support.  
**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



The process of Social Mapping being carried out in Telangana before the selection and survey of the most excluded households.

**Telangana**



The heart of the program: Cluster Samruddhi Sakhi providing one-on-one and group guidance to programme participants, ensuring holistic understanding of Maha-Samruddhi Yojana within the community.

**Maharashtra**



In Boitamari's Koreapahar village, Didis led by Changemaker **Nilima Das** take their Small Group's oath. Beyond being a marker of a new beginning the oath energises the group and builds feelings of unity and purpose.

**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



Oath taking is often followed by a game where Didis indicate how they are feeling on that day and why - options offered are Happy, Regular or Sad. This gives important cues to the Changemakers and the entire group as to the prevailing sentiment(s) within the group. These groups transform into safe spaces for sharing and solidarity for women who are often denied these public spaces and non-familial interactions.

**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



In Jharkhand's Sundarpahari, Didis use the Sarathi app to mark their attendance after a Small Group Meeting. Changemakers use Sarathi to log data on progress of the program. For most women - both Changemakers and Didis it is the first and often only time they use a smart-phone, an act which gives them great confidence in their own ability and is perceived as a marker of self-empowerment by them.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



Training modules cover various areas of livelihood and psycho-social development for our Didis. While the modules are contextualised for the geographical region and language, Changemakers are essential in facilitating these as they ensure that the information shared is relatable by situating their examples within the lived experiences of the Didis. This ensures better comprehension and retention leading to sustained economic and social growth.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Learning and Development modules are made accessible to Didis through the use of pictorial representations and easily comprehensible language, ensuring that adult learners irrespective of literacy level are able to understand and retain the information. This encourages Didis to develop an interest in attending Small Group Meetings where they are able to learn, providing them with a sense of accomplishment.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Trainings are not limited to livelihood practices but also teach Didis essential skills such as basic literacy, numeracy and financial literacy. Much like **Sonda Rani Reang**, other Didis too say that one of the greatest accomplishments they have felt since joining the program and Small Group Meetings is learning how to write their names.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**

“Before joining this, I had completed my 10th grade but I used to do labour work. Neither did I know how to use a mobile phone properly, but now I have learned a lot about using a smart-phone. I wish that like I have stepped out, Didis also step into independence.”

Lali (Changemaker), Rajasthan





**Saralin Taro** (R) Didi receives her Consumption Support Grant while Changemaker **Darisha Maring** (L) explains to her where to sign. CSG is distributed to the chronically vulnerable through Village Organisations along with the Sarpanch, ensuring that community institutions become stakeholders in the socio-economic growth of the most vulnerable households.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



Didis after receiving their Consumption Support Grant in Pahampdem village. CSG is an essential first step towards economic security as it provides monetary grants to fulfill immediate needs. It ensures that Didis can solely focus on growing their livelihoods instead of being forced into distress migration or daily wage labour due to lack of ability to fulfill essential needs.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



Changemaker **Santona Momin** (R) understands from **Pepsi Sangma** (L) Didi what livelihood she would prefer to pursue. Livelihood planning is collaborative and centralises the choice, needs, existing capacity, and context of the Didis to provide livelihood assets that would ensure steady economic growth.

**Umling, Tura, Meghalaya**



There is a checklist of pre-requisites that the participant needs to have to be able to pursue a livelihood. Such as for goat, pig or poultry rearing, they need to have a small space in their home stead or home where they can build the animal shed. Post discussions with **Pepsi Sangma** Didi, **Santona Momin** measures the land Pepsi Didi has to determine its suitability for a pig shed.

**Umling, Tura, Meghalaya**



**Swapner Siri** Cluster Level Federation oversees the distribution of livelihood assets (goats) under the first Livelihood Support Grant. Community institutions like CLFs ensure quality implementation and community ownership of progress for the most vulnerable households by becoming direct stakeholders. Swapner Siri as a CLF believes that role of women led community institutions is essential in ensuring “progress for marginalised women who have always been denied opportunities and rights.”

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**



The day of Livelihood Asset Distribution is a day of joy for Didis. It marks the beginning of a journey towards financial self sufficiency and growth. For many it is the first time that they have owned any form of livelihood asset, providing them a sense of ownership and a possibility of livelihoods beyond daily wage labour.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**

“Some days I am in too much pain to step out but even then I go to Small Group Meetings. I feel heard in those meetings, and I learn something new every time”

Kynthup Nongsteng, Meghalaya





**Rina Goyary** collects pumpkins from her kitchen garden for lunch. Agri-Nuti Kitchen Gardens under SAY supplement the food available to chronically vulnerable households by ensuring they are able to access nutritionally balanced meals across seasons.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



**Shimtilang Lyngdoh** has a flourishing kitchen garden where she is growing over twelve varieties of vegetables. While she already grew vegetables, trainings given in Small Group Meetings supported her in advancing her knowledge. She says that her kitchen garden has ensured that they never lack fresh food.

**Pynursula, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya**



**Salomi Hansda** and her husband harvest their crop of bottle gourd from their kitchen garden. The growth of their garden has not only enriched their plates, but has also enabled them to earn additional income from the garden by selling surplus harvest to other villagers.  
**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Tapashika Chakma** picks mustard leaves to cook her recipe of fried potato with mustard. The growth of her kitchen garden has encouraged other villagers to start their own gardens. They often turn to Tapashika for saplings from her nursery and knowledge which she gained through her training under SAY.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Minu Malik** uses bio-compost for providing nutrition to the plants in her kitchen garden and small farm. She digs a hole in the ground and mixes vegetable and organic waste with cow dung, keeping it covered for at least twenty one days. She believes that the bio-compost enables her to grow vegetables like brinjal even in the summer heat.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Savitri Bendkoli**, a landless mother from Jategaon village, transformed her veranda into a thriving kitchen garden. Growing her own vegetables has improved her family's nutrition and brought her immense pride.

**Trimbakeshwar, Nashik, Maharashtra**



**Pinky Chakma** has grown her kitchen garden beyond meeting her family's nutritional needs. As she did not have a homestead she rented a small piece of land. She coupled together the knowledge she acquired from the Agi-Nutri Garden training and her own resourcefulness to start a small farm. Pinky is meeting both her family's economic and nutritional needs through it.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Sonmuni Sabar** never expected to earn almost ₹ twenty thousand in two seasons from agriculture. Her journey of self sufficiency began with Consumption Grant transfer. Today through the goatery and agriculture she started under Livelihood Grant she can afford medical expenses and her children's school fees.  
**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**

“I have learned a lot since I joined the program, especially through Small Group Meetings. Before, I didn’t even know how to sign my name. Now I have started my own poultry business.”

Doli Paharin, Jharkhand





Changemaker **Anjani Soren** uses the training module on goat rearing during a Small Group Meeting to teach Didis about identifying various diseases in goats. Livelihood trainings provide Didis with information on disease detection and diagnosis, methods of prevention and cure, ways of care and nutrition that needs to be provided for maintaining livestock.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



**Munu Tamang** takes her goats to nearby grassy fields and forested lands to feed during the day. Here she returns in the evening with her goats. Goat rearing has given Munu Didi a renewed purpose and livelihood, as with her progressing old age, she finds it difficult to engage in daily wage labour.

**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Madhumala** Das is twenty-four-years-old and since childhood dreamed of earning her own livelihood. After marriage she was not allowed to go out to work. When she started goat rearing under Livelihood Grant her hopes of becoming economically independent were renewed. For her, her goats symbolise a new lease of life.

**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



**Malika Tati's** goat shed is considered a model goat shed as it is well ventilated, appropriate in size, of ideal elevation from ground, all the while providing shade. She beams with pride when she explains to others how she maintains her shed - cleaning it everyday and ascertaining that she follows all the best practices taught during training by Changemakers under SAY.

**Ambassa, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Komoli Soren's** income from goat rearing and agriculture is an inspiration for others. What began with three goats received under Livelihood Grant has today grown into a herd of twelve due to Komoli's hardwork and training by Changemaker Anjani Soren. Today villagers come to her to understand how her goats stay healthy.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



**Banumati Tati** feeds fresh green leaves to her goats when she is unable to take them to graze. She always ensures they have enough water to drink and regularly gives them mineral blocks. While she had two goats before receiving three more under Livelihood Grant, her goats were never as healthy. She attributes their growth and health to the knowledge she has gathered in trainings under SAY.

**Ambassa, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Sanjhli Hembrom** follows every advice given to her by her Changemaker to ensure her goats are at their healthiest. Recently she has made an azolla bed to grow feed for her goats. Azolla is an aquatic fern which is especially beneficial for livestock. Sanjhli says that without SAY she would have never had this knowledge as no one in their village knew these practices of goat rearing.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



In Sidli, Assam Changemakers and Pashu Sakhi carry out a goat vaccination and castration drive for over fifty households. Besides ensuring health and survival of goats, it provides supplemental income to women carrying out the drive and working as Pashu Sakhis. Programs under DAY-NRLM are guaranteeing economic empowerment of women across the whole rural community through various pathways.

**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**

“From the meetings, I learned about the possibilities of expanding kitchen gardens. It helps my family get fresh vegetables, which means we can eat more nutritious meals every day.”

Shimtilang Lyngdoh  
Mawphlang, Meghalaya





**Asoni Sutradhar** (L, Changemaker) visits **Salomi Hansda** (R, Didi) to check whether Salomi's pigs are healthy. Changemakers provide intensive handholding through personalised guidance and household visits ascertaining that no Didi is left behind.  
**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Rina Goyary** (L) prepares a meal to feed her pigs, based on best practices taught during Small Group Meetings by Changemakers. **Bithorai Barman** (R) always ensures that she, and anyone else entering the piggery, disinfect their feet and hands to ensure that no diseases are passed on to the pigs. Trainings by Changemakers are essential in participants learning about and following best practices.  
**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



**Rina Goyary** ensures absolute cleanliness in her pig shed. She cleans the shed and feeding dishes daily to ensure the pigs grow to be healthy. The pigs she received under Livelihood Support Grant are her most precious asset with her hopes of a secure future tied to them.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



**Bithorai Barman** checks her pigs regularly for diseases. She informs her Changemaker if she notices something amiss, vaccinating and providing care to her pigs according to the guidance. She is determined to grow her herd of pigs, one of the various livelihood practices she has undertaken, driven by her enterprising nature.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



**Gita Oraon's** husband is a bus conductor and often their income is uncertain, especially as they have no land holding. Piggery has brought a major transformation for her household. She has been able to use her homestead to build a piggery and kitchen garden through SAY, providing her family with nutritional security and financial well being.

**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Kanubala Tripura** is a single mother and sole bread-winner for three children and her ailing mother. Her daughter dropped out of school as Kanubala went for daily wage labour, and there was no one to look after the younger children. The piggery she has started with Livelihood Grant has enabled her to reduce her dependence on wage labour. As her income grows, she is keen on sending her daughter back to school.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**

“Women empowerment is essential as women have been historically marginalised. Through our work we empower ourselves as well as other women, especially those most excluded.”

Swapner Siri CLF Members, Tripura





**Sarjina Bibi's** husband is a person with disability which made earning a livelihood difficult for them, especially with an infant son. As her house is on the main street she opened a grocery shop with Livelihood Support Grant. The income from the shop has given Sarjina the confidence which comes with economic independence, and made her certain that nothing will be an impediment for her family's secure future.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



After toiling through their entire lives with hard wage labour, **Mukta Mahakur** and her husband were facing a bleak future with reduced income owing to their old age. Mukta opened a 'pakora' and 'singara' cart with the LSG support, strategically placed at the village market. Now her snacks are a local delicacy and she often runs out within an hour or two of opening shop.

**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Mugli Sabar** belongs to the Sabar community, a denotified tribe, and like other Sabar families in her village lives on a hillock, isolated from the village. With her Livelihood Grant she turned a small room at the village centre into a grocery shop, which now does brisk business. Usually her son runs the shop, providing work and income not just for Mugli but also future generations.  
**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Aruni Rabha** is a Changemaker in Paham village. During a Small Group Meeting she explains what backyard poultry entails for those who want to select it as livelihood. Changemakers help Didis understand the benefits, processes and drawbacks of each livelihood and create individualised plans for Didis to achieve consistent growth.  
**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



Sharing, listening, and empowering. During her household visit, the Samruddhi Sakhi (coach) **Savita Waghre** (R) builds rapport with the programme participant **Sumanbai Tabale** (L), sharing a warm and personal moment of joy.

**Trimbakeshwar, Nashik, Maharashtra**



**Budhni Sabar** owns more than fifty hens which she now nurtures carefully with trainings she received under SAY on feed, disease detection and prevention. Her earlier flock fell prey to disease and exposure and she considers the PoP as an invaluable input in growing her burgeoning flock.

**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Kamal Jagan Lilke**, a widow and landless from Pate village, started a small poultry unit under the Maha Samruddhi Yojana. Selling eggs locally has boosted her confidence and given her hope that her situation can improve through steady effort.

**Peth, Nashik, Maharashtra**



**Doli Paharin** has over eighty hens, a livelihood she believes will support her in reaching economic independence. She envisions growing it into a larger business and has allocated space for it. She says Small Group Meetings have given her this confidence, whereas before she did not even know how to write her name.

**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**

“We have our group meetings weekly. There we learn how to grow crops in a kitchen garden, do goaterly, write our names, calculate.. we learn something new each time.”

Kalpana Nayek, West Bengal





**Lata Nayek** carefully examines the saal leaves before picking. The leaves have to be of the perfect texture, if they are too old and dry they crack and if they are new leaves they tear apart while weaving.  
**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**

Besides saal leaves, the Lodha-Sabar community, a denotified tribe, in Jhargram also depends on other non timber forest produce for their livelihood. **Lulhi Nayak** digs for medicinal and edible roots which they can consume as food as well as sell in the local market.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**





**Suru Mallik** collects medicinal roots and plants which she processes to sell in the local haat (market). Here she shows wild potato that she has foraged. Besides weaving saal leaves and daily wage labour, selling NTFP products is an essential source of income for the community who live on subsistence agriculture and forest produce.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Rekha Bhakta** (L) and **Anjana Bhakta** (R) are neighbours and usually venture into the forest to collect saal leaves together. They carry bundles of saal leaves and thin wood stems to weave the leaves into plates. Here they are also carrying stems which are used as medicines for toothache.  
**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



The forests where saal trees grow are areas which often fall on elephant corridors and see high incidents of elephant - human interactions. Usually exclusively women pick saal leaves and weave them. They go to the forest in a group as it is safer and ensures that they are able to pick more leaves, as they keep each other company.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Women, especially neighbours often sit together to weave these plates. Leaves which have holes or are torn are rejected. While the Didis from Sabar community do the primary work of weaving the plates, (they received around ₹ 50 for a bundle of 1000 plates), much of the money goes to middlemen who get the plates stitched further with thread and machines, reinforcing the stitches made by the Didis.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Sabar households are chronically economically and socially vulnerable which makes them unable to afford sewing machines to stitch the plates, even though the primary toil is theirs. Under SAY they will receive sewing machines which will help them increase their margin of profit and ensure they get fair compensation for their hardwork.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



After stitching the plates together, they are dried in the open. Once dried they are tied into bundles of a thousand to sell to the middle man. **Rundu Nayek** (L) spreads the freshly woven plates during a summer afternoon to dry on the hot concrete road. **Janata Nayek** shows the bundles she has made with each bundle consisting of a hundred plates.  
**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**

Joy





Neighbours and relatives **Nispo Rung Reang** (L) and **Sonda Rani Reang** (R) share a moment of leisure on a Sunday, while dressing in traditional attire to go to church.  
**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Theilin Timung** comes back home from her lush kitchen garden and nursery, and relaxes at home while lighting the fire to make the evening cup of tea for her family.  
**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



After a long day on field Changemakers and sisters-in-law **Dipika Reang** (L) and **Sranti Reang** (R) make their way home with a pumpkin and a few haricot beans gifted by Didis from their kitchen garden.  
**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Moilati Tripura** finds some time during her busy day to work on her loom and weave a rignai (wrap skirt and shawl) for herself. Her loom is outside her house in her small homestead.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**



**Jhilimili Shabar** (L) and **Ruma Shabar** (R) find a moment to have a conversation with each other after their Small Group Meeting. While they are neighbours, such moments of unfettered conversation are rare and usually happen when women gather for their group meetings.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Gita Oraon** poses with her husband and their two daughters outside their house. It was one of the rare days when her husband did not go to work as a bus conductor, an opportunity made possible due to the alternate livelihood of piggery that Gita has selected under Livelihood Grant.

**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



Few participants from **Longaguri Small Group** play passing the parcel while others whose turn is done watch gleefully. The last person left has to share in detail about how they are feeling and why. These games bring lightness and leisure in otherwise long work days of our Didis.  
**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**



Changemakers **Jayashree Mahata** (L), **Matangini Mallik** (C), and **Jayandi Das** (R) share a joyful time discussing about their personal lives during a break in their work. For Changemakers their work gives them opportunity to interact with other non-familial women, freedom of movement and economic independence.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Renumala Tripura** rises early in the morning and splashes water on her kuchha mud floor before sweeping it and organising her home for the day. While her day is filled with exertion she cherishes the early morning hour when everything is quiet and she has time for herself.

**Ambassa, Dhalai, Tripura**



**Sarjina Bibi** sits in her grocery shop with her infant son, smiling brightly. Her self assurance comes from her knowledge that she has been able to ensure that her child will gain a good education and a secure future. She is the primary earning member in her household and has been able to overcome the hardships of marginalisation her family faces.

**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**

“When I started I thought I am going to teach the baideus, but instead I learned much more. I learnt to have hope, never give up and continue fighting for one’s goal. Due to them I feel inspired to study further and will be enrolling into university again.”

Nilima Ray (Changemaker), Assam





**Asoni Sutradhar** (L) and **Fulmaya Sutradhar** (R), sisters and Changemakers, have made their mother (C) proud. When villagers criticised their single mother for educating them, their mother remained defiant and resolute. Today villagers look up to the sisters and they encourage them to educate their daughters. Asoni and Fulmaya believe their work is their way to give back to society.

**Sidli, Chirang, Assam**



**Sina Kungor** (L) with her eldest and youngest child. For Sina and her family, it was a happy day as she had just returned home after receiving her Consumption Support Grant, which enabled her to meet some immediate needs including buying groceries and seeds for her small farm.  
**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



**Januki Reang** waits for her children to come back from school while she takes out the chicken curry and sticky rice she has prepared for her children's lunch from the hanging storage, created to save space and keep the food cool with air circulation.

**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**



**Enbina Sangma** is a single mother and had to send her daughter to live with her parents as her house had broken down. With the Consumption Support Grant, she repaired her house and brought her daughter back home. Her Changemaker Santona Momin helped her daughter rejoin school. Here Enbina and her children share a playful moment.

**Umling, Tura, Meghalaya**



**Lata Nayak** (L), **Lulhi Nayak** (C) and **Ratni Nayak** (R) came back home after foraging for forest produce which they sell at the local market for its medicinal value. They explain each plant's medicinal property, the price it fetches, and how it is processed for further use.  
**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Changemakers **Pratima Ahir** (L) and **Gurupriya Mahata** (R) try to protect themselves from the blistering summer heat, while visiting Didis' homes, by sharing a scarf.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Changemakers **Anjani Soren** (L), **Basmati Tudu** (C), and **Sunita Murmu** (R) sit with Basmati didi's daughter Annie to protect themselves from a heavy downpour, during their field visits. Basmati didi's daughter Annie is especially excited to see a camera and poses eagerly.  
**Sundarpahari, Godda, Jharkhand**



During the afternoon, **Baisko Rung Reang** (L) Didi weaves a rignai (skirt and shawl) on her loom with her grandson sleeping in his swing, while Changemaker **Romita Meska** (R) takes a break during her household visits. As Romita says, Changemakers and Didis become akin to families for each other.  
**Dasda, North Tripura, Tripura**

**Swmle Muchahary** uses spools of threads and winds the yarn around sticks fixed in the ground. This helps lay out a wide and long length of yarn, which is then fixed onto the handloom for weaving into cloth.  
**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**





**Bihula Brahma** Didi's daughter-in-law weaves gamchas (towels) on the loom. Both Bihula and her daughter-in-law are widows, but the handloom is both a source of income and reassurance for them.  
**Borobazar, Chirang, Assam**

“Starting with Consumption Support my growth has been aided by SAY. Consumption Grant helped me buy ration and repair my house. Today with earnings from my livelihoods I can pay medical expenses and school fees.”

Sonmuni Sabar, Jharkhand





As temperature outside soars over 40 degrees celsius, **Sarbani Sabar** hugs her son to comfort him as he cries, and dissuades him from going outside to play.

**Jhargram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



**Lusia Kongor** prepares kwai (beetle nut, beetle leaf and slaked lime) to offer to her guests. It is a traditional practice in Meghalaya to offer guests kwai and share it during community events to show respect and camaraderie.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



**Mugli Sabar** takes a break between selling groceries to customers, early evenings are the busiest time at her shop as people come to buy snacks and other household items.

**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**



**Joba Pramanik** and husband Shalkhan Pramanik are childless. While Joba weaves saal leaves into plates, her husband makes ploughs. In the evening they enjoy some respite after the day's exertion.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**



Village Organisation member of Pahampdem village photographs Consumption Support Grant distribution by the VO. CSG distribution is an occasion of joy for Didis. It is the first step towards economic self sufficiency which they achieve through the program and builds confidence in the program among Didis.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



Changemakers **Laxmi Hembrom** riding her bike along with **Shivani Mardi** stop for a break on their way to conduct Small Group Meetings with Didis. They look forward to their journey together, as it provides them space for forming their own community - an identity beyond their familial identity.  
**Dumaria, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**

**Shikha Mallik**, along with her neighbours, weaves saal leaves into plates and shows their speed and adeptness gained through hours of toil over several years.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**





**Gouri Chakraborty, Lata Karmakar, and Minu Das** (L to R) fan themselves during a Small Group Meeting on a humid day. Irrespective of the weather and their age, Didis ensure that they come for their meetings where they are able to share their lived experience and have their voices heard.  
**Boitamari, Bongaigaon, Assam**



**Iophinta Bongrung's** daughter returns from school and converses with her. Iophinta looks forward to this time of the day as she is able to spend it with her daughter without any interruptions. She is happy that her daughter is receiving an education, an opportunity she never had.

**Demdema, West Garo Hills, Meghalaya**



**Lulhi Nayak** is known for her expertise in foraging and identifying forest produce. She enthusiastically shows a wild potato that she has dug out, a process which is tedious but if successful fulfilling. She says that it has medicinal property of helping with body aches and pain.

**Nayagram, Jhargram, West Bengal**





“Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul  
And sings the tune without the words  
And never stops at all.”

This book is dedicated to our Didis and Changemakers, who translate these narratives of resilience, agency, and joy into a lived reality. Through each decision they take and each step they travel, they move us closer to the vision of social justice, inclusion and hope in a more equal world.



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