

# Community Led Extension System for Promotion of Improved Farm Livelihoods for Self Help Groups

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DAY - NRLM organizes all poor households (women) into aggregate institutions of the poor that provide them with voice, space and resources. These platforms 'of the poor' and 'for the poor' would partner with local self-governments, public service providers, banks, private sector and other mainstream institutions to facilitate delivery of social and economic services to the poor. There are about 10 Crore women and mobilized them into about 95 lakh SHGs. The SHG have been further federated into higher community institutions like Village Organisations (VO) and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs). Further SHG members are mobilised into livelihood institutions like Producer Groups and Producer Enterprises (PEs). With such massive mobilization, the mission holds great promise for advancing women's socio-economic empowerment through structured interventions.

One of the core objectives under DAY-NRLM for agriculture is to promote and strengthen women farmers by promoting Agro Ecological Practices. Agro ecological practices are those forms of agriculture that helps farmer move away from agriculture with high chemical inputs usage reducing the impacts on ecosystem and bio diversity. So, the guiding principle is to promote green agriculture technologies/practices and developing the complete package of practices with minimum use of synthetic chemicals inputs like pesticide and fertilizer.

Farm intervention strategy has been around "the household", identify 2 to 3 livelihoods activities per household and focus has been to reduce/stop use of purchased agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides and to some extent seeds) which reduce cost of farming, enhance productivity and production, improve quality of produce, popularising agro ecological practices, mimicking natural processes keeping focus on environmental issues to address household food and later nutrition security through

diversity in crops grown by individual households. As NRLM has no provision of subsidy or grant to individuals, from the very beginning emphasis has been on training and capacity building through a community led approach.

Agriculture extension system bridges the gap between research labs to a farmer's field. Agricultural research, education and extension are said to be the most critical for promoting farm productivity and enhancing farmer's income. The public sector is major extension service provider and the reach of the public extension is limited in India and in addition it is burdened with non-extension responsibilities such as the distribution of subsidies and inputs, with little time left to attend to core extension activities.

Further, extension personnel are less than the recommended ratio of 1:750 at a national level. Hiring and training sufficient number of extension professionals in the sector can significantly contribute to the farmer's income. India spent just 0.7 per cent of Agriculture GDP on agriculture research and education which includes extension and training, which is far below the recommended 2 per cent by the World Bank. The Government vision of achieving doubling of farmer's income by 2022 without the successful delivery of agricultural extension to rural smallholder farmers is a daunting task. Nurturing social capital / Community Resource Persons is emerging as one of the solutions to bridge the gap.

Community Resource Persons (CRPs) are members of the community who have graduated out of poverty with the help of their SHGs. The fact that a woman is sharing her life story with another woman has brought credibility to the process of development. CRP rounds are the cornerstone of the DAY – NRLM livelihood strategy. This strategy essentially rests on the premise that the community learns from the community better.

CRPs (*Krishi sakhi*) are active women among the mahila kisan in identified villages who are keen to implement agro-ecological practices in their own fields over two to three crop seasons. *Krishi sakhi* will be identified by Block Project Managers with support from leaders of Cluster Level Federation (CLF). Identification of CRPs will be done through a well-defined process of written exam, field verification and interview. After following the due diligence, CLFs will hire the services of CRPs. Livelihood subcommittee at CLF, with support from Block Mission Managers monitor the work of CRPs. CLFs pay the honorarium based on the tasks accomplished by them.

CRPs will be deployed for fifteen days in a month in the villages. They will be assigned specific tasks depending on the season. CRPs are expected to extend handholding support to Mahila Kisan in adoption of Natural Farming practices. Krishisakhis, during their field visits handhold farmers through demonstrating various practices. Following are the key deliverables of CRPs:

- **Adoption of agro ecological practices in their own fields:** *Krishisakhis* implement agro ecological practices in their own fields. They should demonstrate agro ecological practices to other farmers in the village.
- **Assisting Block Mission Management unit:** Mobilise farmers for various activities organised by Block Mission Management unit viz Farmer Field Schools, demonstrations, trainings etc. CRPs also extend their support to in data collection, preparation of action plans, individual farmer field visits, documentation of various activities and report preparation.
- **Establishment of NPM shops and Custom Hiring Centres:** Identify entrepreneur for establishment of NPM shop and tools and equipment for establishment of Custom Hiring Centres. CRP is responsible for assisting village organisation in managing Custom Hiring Centres. CRP is responsible for extending handholding support to NPM shop owner.
- **Participation in training programs:** CRPs participate in various training programs organised by State Rural Livelihood Missions.

- **Participation in SHG /VO meetings:** Participate SHG and VO meeting and share information on farm livelihood activities. CRP also identify the needs of SHG members for strengthening their livelihood activities.
- **Establishing Nutritional Gardens / Poshan Vatika at household level:** CRPs create awareness among the SHG members and ensure grounding of nutri gardens / Poshan Vatika at Household level on saturation basis.
- **Attending briefing and debriefing sessions:** CRPs participate in briefing and de-briefing sessions along with mCRP conducted by PRP/BPM.

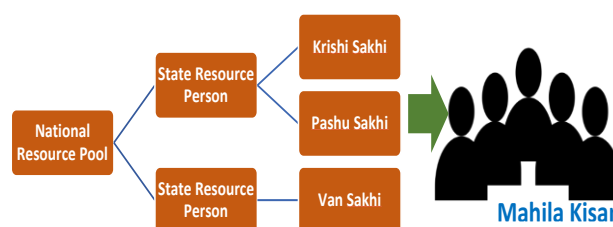


Fig 1

In an ever-changing environment, wherein technology keeps on changing rapidly, the existing skills become redundant, and newer skills are constantly felt. Professionalism in training calls for different sensitivity, besides subject matter knowledge, to deal with adult clientele. With this context, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) developed a training and capacity building architecture under the farm livelihoods component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana -National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). CRPs will be deployed after attending well-structured training of fifty-six days. Capacity building of CRPs is continuous process, refresher trainings before and after season is mandatory. Krishisakhis are trained by State Resource Persons (SRPs).

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's welfare and DAY - NRLM collaborated for training and certification of Krishisakhis on Natural Farming. About 70,000 Krishisakhis are undergoing training by well-trained Master trainers from Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and other civil society organisations. Master trainers are certified by National Institute of Agriculture Extension Management (MANAGE).

These Krishisakhis will attend five-day residential training for certification as Para Extension Workers by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare.



**Fig 2. Krishisakhis undergoing an exposure visit**

Training to Krishisakhis will be imparted by State Agriculture Universities, KVKs and empanelled Resource Agencies. MANAGE, the nodal agency will develop the five-day training module and provide training to the identified Master Trainers. Master trainers and champion farmers will impart training to Krishisakhis.

Training module covers all the technical aspects of natural farming including field demonstrations. After successful completion of the trainings Krishisakhis will be provided certificates by MANAGE. CRPs will be provided training on various concepts of Natural Farming which includes the principles and components of Natural Farming, Soil Health Management through Natural Farming practices, Soil properties, Soil ecology (Microbes, Earthworms, Porosity etc), Soil health improvement practices, Seed systems, importance of Local seeds/ Landraces, Varieties resistant to Biotic and Abiotic stress, cropping systems including Multi Cropping, inter cropping, Mixed cropping, Multi storey/Agro forestry, Crop production system, Weed management and Water management.

DAY NRLM nurtured about 2.39 lakh Community Resource Persons to provide

handholding support to SHG members on various livelihood activities like natural farming, livestock rearing, NTFP, fish rearing etc *Krishi Sakhis*. Each CRP is providing last mile delivery of extension services for fifty Mahila Kisan. So far CRPs are supported 3.60 Crore Mahila Kisan in adoption of Natural Farming / Agro Ecological practices, 2.20 crore Agri nutri gardens, 1.42 crore SHG members in adoption of improved livestock management practices, 7.72 lakh SHG members in adoption sustainable harvest practices in collection Non-Timber Forest Produce.



**Fig 3. CRP Demonstrating seed treatment with Bheejamruth**

CRP movement has broken the barriers imposed by the stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs long cherished by the society. In a village you will find many types of CRPs like BC sakhi, swasth sakhi, krishisakhi, pashu sakhi, vansakhi, matsyasakhi, NAMO drone didi etc. CRPs are using software to calculate the interest on the loan that is outstanding for her federation, explaining the difference between natural and conventional farming practices, importance of poshan vatika etc There are innumerable examples that illustrate the breaking of the norms that prevented women from performing tasks that are considered to be only men's prerogative and showcasing "Nari sakthi".

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