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# EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN JHARKHAND

## JHARKHAND ANTI-TRAFFICKING NETWORK: A CASE STUDY



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# Introduction

The "Empowering Civil Society for Social Change in Jharkhand" project (the project) was a collaborative effort between the Civil Society Academy and Gender at Work aimed at strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs) in Jharkhand. This initiative, funded by the Oak Foundation, was implemented in two phases: Phase 1 from October 2018 to December 2019 and Phase 2 from January 2020 to June 2023.

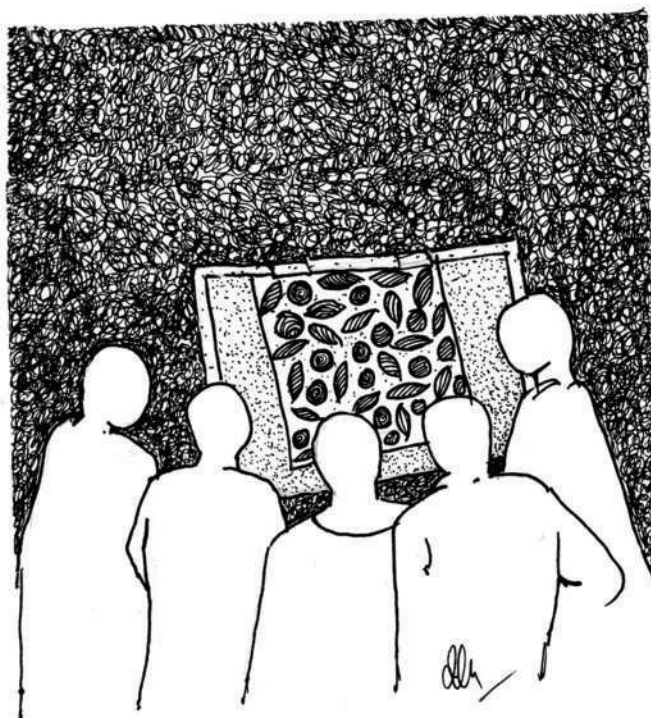
The project had two primary objectives:

- To enhance leadership capacity within civil society organisations in Jharkhand to contribute to positive social changes for marginalized groups.
- To build strong grassroots Civil Society Organisation (CSO) networks to support social change movements in Jharkhand.

Five organisations/networks, identified by the Oak Foundation, participated in the project: Jharkhand Anti-Trafficking Network, Samvad, Ibtida, Ekjut, and Maitri. Gender at Work focused its interventions on building the capacity of the Jharkhand Anti-Trafficking Network and Samvad, while the Civil Society Academy directed its efforts towards Ekjut and Maitri.

The project focused on strengthening organisational capacities, promoting CSO leadership, fostering solidarity and alliance-building among CSOs in Jharkhand, and providing a platform for critical reflection and dialogue. Additionally, the project invested in building a cadre of organisational change facilitators in Jharkhand to continue supporting CSO capacity strengthening efforts beyond the project's duration.

This case study assesses and documents the contribution of the project (and the role of Gender at Work) to enhancing the leadership and network capacity of the Jharkhand Anti-Trafficking Network. Specifically, it examines the types of capacities strengthened and the difference this has made to the network, including its constituent members. It also considers the processes through which these changes have occurred (the pathways of change).



# Methodology

The methodology employed for developing the case study relied on a qualitative approach and encompassed the following methods:

- A comprehensive desk review of programme documents, including workshop reports, progress reports, and other relevant reports.
- Interviews with key programme staff at Gender at Work and workshop facilitators.
- In-depth interviews with six, first line and six, second line leaders of JATN's member organisations.
- A focus group discussion with six field workers from different member organisations.
- Follow-up, in-person meetings with key stakeholders at the 'Learning Harvesting Workshop' held in June 2023.

Two, main limitations were encountered during the data gathering process:

- Interview participants displayed better recall of more recent trainings compared to earlier learning experiences. To mitigate this gap, the literature review was leveraged.
- Virtual, online interviews, particularly with field level staff, presented, in some instances, connectivity challenges. In-person interactions and meetings with project participants at the Learning Harvesting Workshop, however, helped to clarify and resolve data gaps.

## Gender at Work Framework

The Gender at Work framework was used to analyze the findings across the four, inter-connected quadrants of change: consciousness and capabilities; resources and opportunities; rules, policies, and regulations; and social norms and deep cultures (Figure 1). The Gender at Work framework is useful for highlighting individual and organisational changes across formal and informal spheres<sup>1</sup>.



This case study is divided into three sections. It begins with an introduction to JATN as well as the project implementation context. Findings are then presented by each quadrant, as in Figure 1. Finally, the case study concludes by examining factors that influenced the changes and highlights key lessons learned.

<sup>1</sup>See <https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/>



# Background

Established in 1999, the Jharkhand Anti-Trafficking Network (JATN or network) is a consortium of 13 CSOs (member organisations) working on issues of safe migration and gender rights in 13 districts covering approximately 130 villages. Historically, the network has been led by a member organisation that is designated as State Co-ordinator and that is supported by a core team consisting of other member organisations. A unique feature of the network is that its membership is comprised of individually led, small grassroots organisations, with annual budgets ranging from approximately USD \$ 6,000 to USD \$ 150,000.

Through its member organisations, JATN works with marginalized communities such as Dalits and minorities. It raises greater awareness and disseminates relevant information on safe migration and women's rights to migrants and their families, primarily through the 'Migrant Forums' it has established in the communities where it works. JATN also facilitates the access of migrants and their families to available public schemes and other government entitlements at the village, Panchayat<sup>2</sup>, block and district levels. JATN also works with women's collectives, such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), as well as government departments to address trafficking and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). It also provides counseling and support to VAWG survivors.

A needs assessment was conducted by the Atma Foundation<sup>3</sup> at the outset of the project, which revealed key areas for network/organisational capacity development.

- Establishing a clear, collective identity and enhancing network visibility.
- Building leadership capabilities both at the network level and within individual member organisations.
- Formulating policies for the overarching network and its member entities to reinforce and solidify their structure.
- Improving network resilience and unity.
- Amplifying collective advocacy efforts through rigorous documentation of JATN's interventions and results.

During the project's tenure, the lead organisation left the network due to reasons unrelated to the project, marking a significant leadership transition (Phase I). While this shift raised apprehensions about the network's future, especially given the lead organisation's stature as one of its largest and best-funded members, it also revealed fresh opportunities that will be elaborated in subsequent sections.

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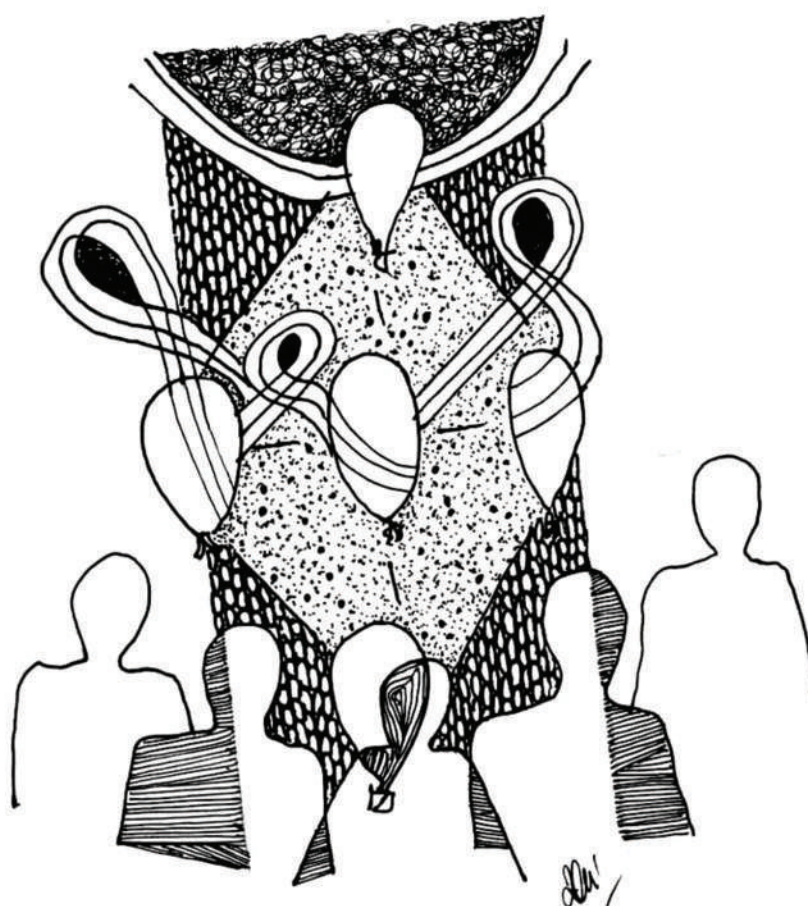
<sup>2</sup>An administrative unit comprised of a cluster of villages.

<sup>3</sup>ATMA (2018), *Life Stage Survey Report*, Unpublished



In Phase II, the project met with two significant, external challenges: the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of the 2020 amendments to the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act, 2010 (FCRA). The pandemic limited in-person interactions and necessitated a reallocation of member organisations' programme funds to respond to the urgent needs of returning migrants. Moreover, the pandemic brought significant hardships for staff across all member organisations. Changes to the FCRA placed stringent funding prohibitions on CSOs and posed an existential threat to the network's smaller member organisations.

In navigating and adapting to these shifts, including opportunities that emerged from them, Gender at Work, together with JATN, focused project efforts at enhancing the network's capacity for adaptation, resilience, and self-renewal. Central to the project's approach was the revitalization of JATN's vision, strategy, and identity and reinforcing the network's internal learning mechanisms. It also concentrated on enhancing individual and organisational capacities in important areas such as documentation, communication, and advocacy. In addition to capacity development workshops<sup>4</sup>, Gender at Work held a series of one-on-one meetings with the JATN and provided on-going coaching, mentoring and accompaniment support, particularly during the pandemic.



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<sup>4</sup>Most of the trainings were conducted by Gender at Work, while others were held jointly with the Civil Society Academy. Over the course of the project, JATN benefitted from eight exclusive workshops, designed and led by Gender at Work; nine joint initiatives co-delivered by Gender at Work and the Civil Society Academy; two reflection meetings and a Learning Harvesting Workshop held at the end of the project.



# Findings

## Consciousness and capabilities

The project significantly enhanced the confidence and capacity levels of individuals, leading to reported changes at all levels. The unanimous feedback from first- and second-line leaders to field workers highlighted the project's important influence on their self-awareness, communication skills, and professional approach.

### Increased confidence levels

Most interviewees noted marked improvements in their confidence levels and communication skills, including an appreciation for inclusive communication. They attributed this transformation to the training's pedagogical approach, which emphasized engaging activities and games and fostered open discussions and collaborative group work. Several interviewees mentioned that they have since integrated these methods into their programmatic work.

*The style of this training was entirely new to me. With numerous discussions and games, I often found myself waiting for the "actual" training to begin. However, at the end of the day, it became clear how much I had learned through these interactive methods. My understanding deepened considerably. The training boosted my confidence, and I believe I've become more articulate. I observed similar changes in my colleague who attended the workshop with me.  
(1st line leader, JATN)*

*I can see the difference in myself. Earlier I used to hesitate to speak or participate in group discussions. But I was made to do presentations in the group. This has definitely built my confidence. Not only am I more confident and articulate but I have also been selected to represent my organisation abroad (Tanzania) on migrant issues. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*Our understanding really grew. I gained a confidence that I didn't have. I feel that I have become more articulate. (2nd line worker, JATN)*

*My communication has become better particularly at the field level. Earlier I used to deliver information, but now I try to be participatory and listen to others. This has also helped me disseminate information better. (Field worker, JATN)*

### Increased capability to integrate a gender lens into programmes.

Despite JATN staff being involved in women-specific programmes, many lacked a grasp of gender justice or feminist ways of working. The project introduced staff members to these concepts and approaches.

*Although we had been working on women's rights, we did not have much clarity on gender inequality. This was something that I was introduced to. (1st line leader, JATN)*



*I came into this project with fixed notions of how work can be done. I didn't have any idea of gender inequality or the different forms gender-based violence can take. Nowadays I am reflecting on my conduct. I really liked the way that Gender at Work spoke of safe spaces and how these need to be created so that everyone feels secure and able to speak. This has made me more conscious of how I speak to others. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

While there have been improvements in both knowledge and attitudes, these concepts have not yet been fully internalized by all participants.

### **Increased awareness of inclusive leadership styles**

The project catalysed a shift in leadership perspectives, particularly among first- and second-line leaders. They recognized the imperative of nurturing successive leadership for the sustained future of their organisations. While formalized systems for fostering this new leadership tier have yet to be established, there has been a noticeable effort by first line leaders to push younger staff into leadership training and to delegate more responsibilities to them.

*We are a small organisation, and I didn't think of a second line of leadership until I attended the trainings. My focus has always been on getting the programme work done. Now I realize its importance—after all, once I am not there, how will the organisation continue unless there are others to take on a leadership role. (1st line leader, JATN).*

*Engagements with Gender at Work made me realize the need for second and third lines of leadership. With this realization, I feel that I have become better at listening to others. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*I attended all the meetings and encouraged the second line to attend as well. I feel that their participation enhanced their understanding of the work and the organisation/network. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*There is a lot that needs to be done for putting in place a second line of leadership. We have started putting processes and systems in place and creating high level positions. I have also stepped back from my role. I feel that the second line of leaders will be better equipped than us, as they have received training on strategic planning and are already putting that learning to use. (1st line leader, JATN)*

This shift has empowered younger second line leaders, especially women, to not only deliver programme interventions better but also to encourage the emergence of a third line of leadership and improve women's leadership at the community level.





*I have seen the efforts made by the organisation head to delegate more responsibilities to us. In turn, we are more conscious of preparing a third line of leadership. One of the challenges we face is high turnover rates at the field level. But this is bound to happen, and we must find ways of dealing with it. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

*We feel that we are more empowered to take decisions at the field level since we are aware of the issues and what can be realistically achieved. Previously we used to work on instructions but now we try to discuss implementation strategies more. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

*I identify myself as being in the 2nd line of leadership. This feeling was instilled due to the trainings with Gender at Work. I also look for opportunities to instill leadership skills among the adolescent girls I work with. I try to do this by giving them more opportunities to speak at decision-making forums. We also speak to issues of differential treatment received by women and men workers. I also promote women's leadership in our migrant's forums. (Field workers, JATN)*

As second line leaders, and even field workers, have grown more confident in their capabilities, there has been a notable increase in the demand for their services.

*There has been increased participation from the field. We have been receiving many more phone calls for support. We also try to encourage leadership at the field level. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

## Resources and opportunities

Amidst JATN's leadership transition during the implementation period, the project played a pivotal role in consolidating the network. Ensuring the stability and strength of the network was a significant achievement of the project. Moreover, by improving crucial skills on fundraising and documentation, the project indirectly increased resources available, particularly for women in communities.

### Shared resources among network members

Gender at Work's support played a pivotal role in helping JATN to establish a clear network identity. Through facilitated sessions, JATN was able to revise its vision, mission, goals, and objectives, as well as reflect on network values and culture needed to enhance network cohesion and alignment. A concrete outcome was the design of JATN's logo, the development of its website and brochure, which aided in giving the network a distinct and recognizable identity.



*The change in leadership meant that we needed hand holding support to keep the network running. The Gender at Work project couldn't have come at a better time. We were able to design a logo, a brochure, put up a web page and revise our by-laws. Member organisations are more active now.*  
(1st line leader, JATN)

*Establishing JATN's identity was critical. This has not only enhanced its credibility with funding agencies but has also enabled it to amplify grassroots work at the state level. It also gives us the hope of expanding the work of the network to cover more thematic areas such as the protection of domestic workers' rights.*  
(1st line leader, JATN)

*I can confidently say that I belong to a state-level network. I don't feel alone and know that I can help others in the network as well.* (1st line leader, JATN)

Consequently, JATN experienced increased visibility and recognition at different levels. Second line leaders and field workers reported that state authorities, such as the Labour Department, have become more receptive to working with JATN members. Other interviewees reported receiving more requests for assistance from community members, who trust JATN to support them in accessing the relief they seek. This indicates growing recognition and confidence in JATN's capabilities from external sources.

*I feel that we have become more human rights based, cohesive and active now. There is more recognition from the government and funders, as well as the media. We can communicate better among ourselves and with others outside the network. Although the network survived through the years, even without funding at times, I feel that the quality of the network has now improved.*  
(1st line leader, JATN)

### **Increased documentation and fund-raising capacity**

In direct response to the needs identified by JATN members, the project delivered trainings on specific themes, which were instrumental in boosting the network's organisational efficiency and resilience.

All interviewees mentioned the high utility of trainings on documentation and fundraising. Workshops on documentation resulted in considerable improvements in reporting, particularly in terms of enhancing the accuracy of reports and discerning impact and change through storytelling methods.

*We've since compiled a collection of stories for publication on our website. Beyond the tangible outputs, the process itself was empowering.*  
(1st line leader, JATN)



Member organisations applied their documentation skills to their work related to safe migration as well as to other projects, e.g., responding to gender-based violence. Each member organisation has prepared stories of change, which are being compiled into a publication.

Improved documentation has also strengthened organisational fundraising efforts. There appears to be significant application of lessons learnt in identifying and approaching different kinds of donors, as well as preparing proposals in a comprehensive and participatory manner.

*The fundraising workshop was useful as we do not have such information at the ground level. We were able to raise funds after the training and to expand our work to 150 villages on issues of child sexual abuse, child marriage and child labour. I was able to count on the support of the [workshop] facilitators even after the training. Before, we used to think that all we needed to do was to fill in funding application formats on time. But now, we have realized that we need to consider what the funding agency wants and how we are aligned with the donor. (1st line leader, JATN)*

### **Enhanced coordination structures**

To foster intra-network collaboration and collective decision-making, Gender at Work supported the establishment of key network committees, including a Core committee, a Communication and Documentation Committee and a Grievance Redressal Committee. While the effectiveness of the latter two committees was not clear from the interviews, interviewees reported that the network Core Committee has been very active. It has contributed to improving network visibility among member organisations and to strengthening team communication skills.

*There are now structures in place for the network, such as core committees, that allow participation from our members. We discuss our problems and try to arrive at solutions jointly. For instance, the last time the core committee met, we discussed whether we should include children of migrant workers in our interventions and what the likely ramifications would be. There is a constant exchange of knowledge and ideas among the members and the organisations are working well together. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

### **Increased resources and opportunities for communities**

Strengthened network capacity in the aforementioned areas has led to stronger programming interventions, which, in turn, have translated into tangible gains for communities. Following are a few examples:

*After the advocacy training, we held a discussion in our (community) group to identify the issues that concerned us the most. We realized that registration cards for workers in the unorganized sector weren't being processed. Based on this discussion and our acquired knowledge, we launched a campaign promoting registration. As a result, we managed to register 350 workers." (1st line leader, JATN)*



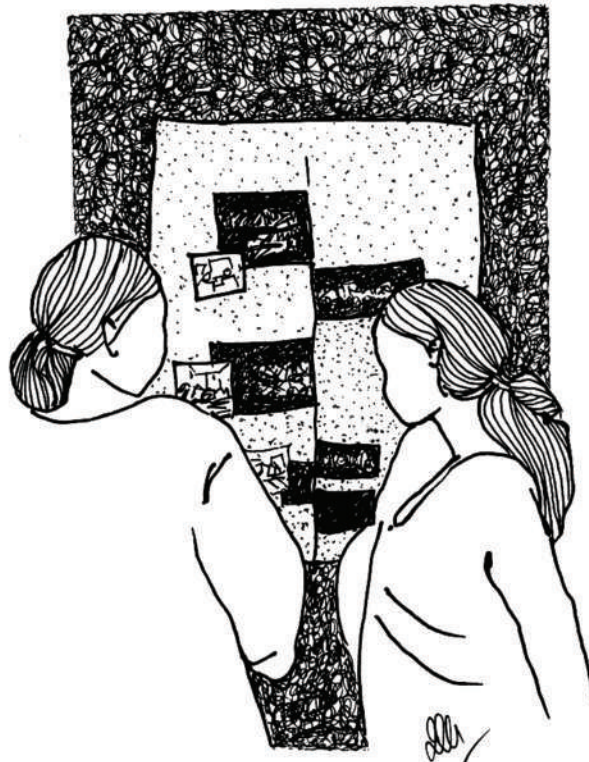
We aim to encourage leadership at the field level. We organize women into groups and then select a leader who communicates with us regularly. These groups conduct in-depth discussions, develop safety plans for migration, and work with the Labor Department to issue worker identity cards.

*(2nd line leader, JATN)*

We helped 110 laborers obtain their worker identity cards. We also facilitated registration for various other services including education and maternity-related benefits. This initiative increased awareness among the workers, who then disseminated the information throughout the villages. We have received requests to expand our work to other villages. *(2nd line leader, JATN)*

Following the trainings, I facilitated a stakeholder mapping at the community level to identify those responsible for providing information to migrant workers who are facing issues in their work destinations. In one instance, a group of 6-7 workers went to Odisha for employment but weren't paid. We were able to approach the appropriate authorities in the Labor Department to file a written complaint. The Labor Department in Jharkhand liaised with their counterparts in Odisha, who then communicated with the employing company. The workers received their wages after two months. We also succeeded in recovering amounts taken by middlemen through the stakeholders we identified.

*(2nd line leader, JATN)*



## Social norms and deep structures

The project brought about important changes in organisational culture and practices, including more inclusive ways of working, building a community of learning and practice, as well as its translations in the field.

### Building inclusive organisations

The project has been pivotal in guiding JATN's member organisations towards inclusive ways of functioning. Central to these changes is a notable shift towards more participatory decision-making processes.

*We are developing our organisational culture to make it more inclusive — particularly by emphasizing participatory, bottom-up decision-making. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

*"The organisational development trainings were very important. Discussing inclusivity and how to weave it into our operations was enlightening. We have initiated simple processes and begun discussions on restructuring and reshaping the organisation's culture. We need to move to a stage where everyone participates equally in all decision-making processes and not only in areas that are of interest to them. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

These changes were fostered by the participatory methods applied in the training sessions that exposed participants to new pedagogies. These methods facilitated effective learning and group sharing. Almost all the interviewees appreciated the facilitators' approaches and the emphasis placed on creating open, intimate, and safe environments conducive to active participation.

*I really liked the way the facilitators conducted their sessions. They did not lecture us. Instead, they used discussions to transmit lessons. They were able to create a homely and intimate environment that encouraged participation and dialogue. This was unlike any other trainings that I have attended. Here, the facilitators made sure that we understood everything that was being said. It was not like [other] trainings that I am used to, where there is pressure to complete the schedule and not on how much we are able to absorb and learn. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

These methods promoted collective learning, peer-to-peer learning, and collaboration among the participants, allowing them to share their experiences and knowledge with each other. In turn, this led to greater familiarity with each member organisation's work and increased the potential for future collaborations.

*In most cases, heads of organisations feel that they know everything. This process enabled us to learn from our peers. (1st line leader, JATN)*



The trainings also introduced participants to a wide range of learning tools and methods that they have applied to their own work to further organisational learning and to improve programme interventions in their communities.

*I used games like '5 balloon'<sup>6</sup> and '4Qs'<sup>7</sup> to see how we are doing as an organisation. When we used these tools, we realised that our staff was hesitant to provide feedback. These tools were useful in bringing this issue out. Now we try to be open to feedback. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

The trainings resulted in added emphasis on effective communication within and among member organisations. This included ensuring that learnings acquired through the trainings were cascaded to all staff members.

*After our meetings, we shared our learnings with other staff members and volunteers. As an organisation, we've recognized the essence of clear and simple communication." (2nd line leader, JATN)*

Additionally, the project cultivated more compassionate ways of operating. Many interviewees acknowledged acquiring a heightened sensitivity to staff issues, especially to challenges faced by women.

*The trainings taught us to be cognizant of the underlying reasons for why certain staff members don't meet expectations. With women, for instance, we assess potential obstacles, like difficulties in attending nighttime rescue missions. We've started sending an additional staff member to support women in such missions (1st line leader, JATN)*

*[The trainings] helped me learn that if there is a slow worker in the team, it is important to support them instead of scold them." (2nd line leader, JATN)*

### **Building a culture of learning**

A strengthened network has led to the foundation of a community of practice, albeit an informal one. An important learning from the project has been on how a healthy network operates.

*Our most important learning was how a healthy network works. This required us to review our [member] organisations and branding. We had to re-examine ways of joining with others." (1st line leader, JATN)*

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<sup>6</sup>The '5 balloons' framework is a tool designed to analyze and identify needs for organisational change and its effects on other areas of the organisation.

<sup>7</sup>The 4 Qs framework, derived from Gender at Work's analytical framework, aids in raising questions, analyse information and facilitate organisational change. For more details, see <https://genderatwork.org/resource/gender-at-work-associates-kalyani-menon-sen-and-ray-gordezky-on-their-approach/>



This has led to greater cohesion and allowed member organisations to better understand each other's roles within the network and to collaborate more effectively as a result.

*The trainings were important for us to understand how to work together and how to coordinate as a network. We have certainly become more cohesive now. We understand each other better and are more united.  
(1st line leader, JATN)*

As a direct result of regular interactions and engagements in workshops and meetings convened by the project, member organisations gained greater familiarity with each other's work and their broader networks. Regular meetings have continued beyond project facilitated meetings. This means that member organisations are now better connected. This is true not only of connections between organisation leaders but also between field workers.

*It is through Gender at Work's support that we can communicate better. Now that the members are more active, we can support each other's work, such as help with funding proposal writing. We also meet regularly. Recently we did a study together on safe migration. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*Being part of the network feels like being part of a 13-member family. We rely on each other's support, and we can discuss our issues on the phone. We often discuss our cases together and collectively think of solutions.  
(2nd line leader, JATN)*

*There is a constant exchange of knowledge and ideas among network members, and all 13 organisations are working well together. This, in turn, has enhanced interactions with other organisations and networks, which have been very beneficial for exchanging information. (1st line leader, JATN)*

The Core Committee established during the project also serves as a learning platform. It is a forum where representatives of member organisations address common issues, engage in discussions and exchange expertise. The Core Committee is also vested with the responsibility of sharing common issues with the larger group. Moreover, it has facilitated the data collection by members to inform strategic planning at the network level and to support advocacy.

*As the Core Committee, we realize our role in compiling regular data to base a comprehensive strategy. However, we need to get better at being able to present the data that we have collected in an efficient and creative manner.  
(1st line leader, JATN)*

The project's influence is evident in the way interviewees have embraced peer-to-peer learning, thereby fostering a culture of collaborative knowledge exchange.



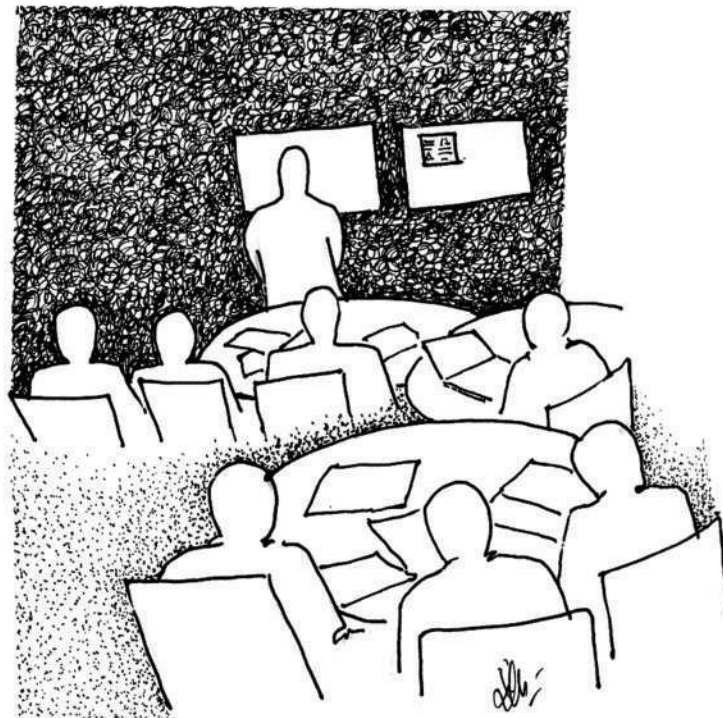
*We have a lot to learn from our peers and the project enabled such cross learnings. For instance, learning from my peers working in other areas has ensured that I consistently raise issues of safe migration at Gram Sabha meetings. (Field worker, JATN)*

### **Changes in norms and practices of interaction with communities**

Most interviewees reported utilizing the skills and lessons they learned through the project in their work, such as applying a gender lens, using participatory methods, and ensuring inclusivity. This has not only improved organisational practices but also the quality of interactions with communities, as the following examples demonstrate.

*We have been addressing issues of gender with more clarity and perspective. Our communication at the community level has improved. Using participatory methods at the community level has made our interactions livelier. Previously, we had to chase community members to attend our meetings. Nowadays, they willingly participate, even on short notice. (1st line leader)*

*Before attending the trainings, I would simply impart information to communities. Now, I engage in discussions instead of giving lectures. This has generated a lot of interest among community members and resulted in more active participation. We also use some of the tools we learned – like the before and after assessment tools to gauge our effectiveness. (2nd line leader, JATN)*



<sup>8</sup>A Gram Sabha is a Panchayat-level local governance forum.





## Policies, Rules, and Regulations

A unique feature of JATN is that it is primarily composed of grassroots organisations located in remote areas. While these organisations are deeply committed to their community work, many have not formally articulated their vision, mission, and values to guide their strategic plans. Moreover, not all member organisations have developed and put in place organisational policies.

Due to their remote settings and resource constraints, many of these organisations have typically had limited access to organisational development opportunities. By strengthening the network, the project enabled the development of JATN's member organisations. This, in turn, has enhanced engagements with external stakeholders and brought about positive changes in the wider environment.

### **Strengthened policies, programmes, strategies, vision and mission**

As part of the network revitalization process, Gender at Work facilitated a comprehensive mapping of JATN's organisational journey. Given staff turnover and the induction of new member organisations, many members were unfamiliar with JATN's rich history. This mapping kickstarted dialogues on the network's vision, mission, and values. These conversations succeeded in forging and solidifying a common network agenda and bolstering strategic planning processes.

Member organisations applied project learnings in three ways: to articulate the organisations' vision and mission; to establish organisational policies; and to systematize programme planning processes.

*Improvements in the network structure were possible with Gender at Work's help. Now there are foundational statements and policies in place. This has given us greater clarity on JATN's role and unity in purpose.*  
(1st line leader, JATN)

*I had never heard of 'vision' or 'mission' or thought seriously about [organisational] values or culture before [the project]. I have started applying these lessons in my own organisation. I have also realised how important it is to communicate the vision and mission of an organisation, especially to new members and external audiences, in a comprehensive and accurate manner.*  
(2nd line leader, JATN)

All first and second line leaders reported instituting key organisational policies such as policies on sexual harassment, safeguarding and child protection. Network members also reported undertaking reviews of their organisational policies and effecting revisions and improvements.



*We reviewed our by-laws after the trainings, ensuring that they were in line with our vision and mission. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*Before the trainings, we held monthly Governing Body meetings. But I learned that only quarterly meetings are needed at the trainings, and we changed our by-laws accordingly. It may seem like a small shift, but it greatly reduced our administrative burden. (1st line leader, JATN)*

The setting of policies has led to greater operational clarity. How effectively these policies are implemented or how impactful they have been is not clear, however. Most field workers were aware of some of the policies, especially the policy on sexual harassment, but not all.

*We've established our policies, which have provided clarity in our operations and recruitment decisions. Expectations are set from the beginning and a commitment elicited to adhere to these policies. While there might be implementation challenges due to varying attitudes toward work, having clear policies guides our work in the right direction. (1st line leader, JATN)*

The establishment of organisational policies has paved the way for introducing review processes to refine planning procedures. The project played a crucial role in encouraging organisations to transition from a narrow programme-centric focus to a broader, systems-oriented perspective.

*In our organisation, we've initiated review processes, revised policies, conducted policy orientations, set up a fundraising team, and embarked on long-term (five-year) planning processes. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*The training underscored the critical institutional needs we must address to guarantee the longevity of our organisation. We've come to understand the importance of transitioning from a project-centric planning approach to a more institution-centric one. (1st line leader, JATN)*

In terms of systematizing programme planning processes, most of the first- and second- line leaders interviewed felt that trainings to build capacities on developing theories of change, proposal writing and project planning, and applying monitoring and assessment tools were extremely useful. Some member organisations reported instituting regular programme monitoring and review processes in the past two years.

*While these [aforementioned] methods aren't new to us, it was great to get inputs from experts to strengthen our understanding. We were introduced to a number of management tools and terminology. It has been interesting to apply these tools to examine not only delivery but the impact of our work. This has also enabled us to better explain our projects and their constitutive elements to our team members and receive their feedback. (1st line leader, JATN)*



*Understanding how to develop a theory of change really helped our long-term planning. In our last planning process, each of our project coordinators did a review of their projects, based on which they input into the process of developing a theory of change. Key gaps found in the review were addressed by preparing additional projects and interventions. For instance, one of the gaps that was unearthed was the lack of support from community men and boys on gender issues. So, we developed interventions to engage with men and boys. (1st line, JATN)*

### **Improved engagements with external stakeholders**

The project contributed to enhancing the advocacy skills of both the network and individual member organisations, aiming for systemic change through collective actions and bolstering their capacity to liaise effectively with duty bearers. The project played a significant role in catalysing efforts for systemic transformations and enhancing the delivery of State services by strengthening negotiation capabilities. It is, however, important to acknowledge that these accomplishments cannot be solely credited to the project, since it augmented ongoing endeavours of JATN and its member organisations.

The majority of JATN's member organisations operate at the district level; a few are focused on the Panchayat levels. Interactions of member organisations with Labour Departments and law enforcement agencies predominate at the district and panchayat levels. Opportunities to engender systemic changes are therefore restricted to these levels. For many members, an incentive for joining JATN was to undertake broader state-level initiatives for change.

*Our main aim of joining JATN was to undertake collaborative action at the state level on issues of safe migration and trafficking. It is useful to have a network of like-minded CSOs to support our work as well as to form a pressure group that can engage directly with the state government or with local administration. (1st line leader, JATN)*

In this regard, the project has brought about shifts in advocacy strategies. In the past, participants primarily perceived advocacy as staging protests to compel state action and response. However, through the project, JATN has broadened its approach to include collective and evidence-based engagements with government agencies.

*We've come to understand the significance of conducting advocacy in a more strategic manner, one that elevates community voices. In JATN, we see our role as amplifying these community voices and the experiences of the 13 member organisations at the state level. As a part of this effort, we convened a successful state-level meeting on safe migration in August 2022. The meeting saw the participation of CSOs, policymakers, and even some members of the state legislature. We used this platform to deliberate on necessary reforms concerning safe migration. While we feel more confident in undertaking state-level advocacy now, advocacy at the central level will require more time. (1st line leader, JATN)*



*We have started doing joint advocacy at the district and state level through the network. It is useful to be part of a well-recognized network like JATN. We also understood the need to support our advocacy with evidence. To illustrate we carried out 10 surveys with domestic workers in the districts that we are present in. The survey showed that employers were not paying fair wages or giving statutory holidays to domestic workers. Based on this data, we felt that a separate law for domestic workers is needed. We have compiled and submitted all our survey recommendations to the Labour Minister of the Jharkhand government. We realize that we need to follow up with meetings with other stakeholders, as well as work collaboratively with other networks for any positive policy change to happen. This initiative would not have happened without Gender at Work's trainings. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

*Before we only managed to carry out small surveys by ourselves. But this time, (while advocating for domestic workers' rights), we were able to compile a significant amount of data through the collective effort of our member organisations. This gave us the 'right' amount of data needed to support our advocacy efforts at the state level. (1st line leader, JATN)*

The project improved individual negotiating skills, namely with government line departments at district and sub-district levels and encouraged the use of evidence in negotiations for the protection of migrant worker rights. Interviewees, particularly second line leaders and field workers, provided numerous examples of successfully supporting migrant laborers or their families to claim public entitlements, such as registrations, pensions, and insurance, from State agencies.

Increased visibility of the network also led to greater recognition and willingness of State agencies to engage with individual staff and member organisations.

*There is an increased recognition of JATN and the work it does among state functionaries. They listen to us when we go to them with complaints. They have confidence that we work for the public interest and hence they are open to working with us. We also help them spread awareness of the different government schemes that are available. We have been able to sensitize department members through our interactions with them. We feel that we can take this work forward at higher levels, especially with improvements in our documentation and data collection. (1st line leader, JATN)*

*Ours is a jungle area. Laborers were taken at night. We reported this to the Labour Department and got it stopped. But we must work consistently with the Mukhiya (Head of Panchayat) and the police to ensure that this does not happen again. (2nd line leader, JATN)*

*Due to our relationship with the Labour Department, we were able to bring back the body of an un-registered migrant worker from South India, overcoming several hurdles (Field worker, JATN)*



# Conclusions

In reflecting on the project's journey, three key factors stand out for their role in facilitating the project's achievements:

## **Leadership Buy-in**

The unexpected leadership transition during the project (Phase I) underscored the need to support the network's continuity. As a result, JATN's new leadership was receptive to the capacity building, mentoring and accompaniment provided by Gender at Work. This openness and engagement encouraged active participation from other member organisations. The convergence of the project's objectives with JATN's emergent needs and senior leadership commitment enabled the network's transformation during the project period.

## **Pedagogies adopted and appropriateness of facilitators**

The participatory pedagogical approaches employed during the workshops were highly praised by all the interviewees. Instead of relying on traditional lecture formats, the facilitators employed interactive methods such as games, group discussions, and other engaging techniques to foster learning through dialogue. These learning tools were then applied for organisational strengthening as well as in the field, leading to greater community participation and interest in the programmes of the member organisations.

## **Adaptability and responsiveness of the project**

Gender at Work made a deliberate effort to co-create workshops with JATN to ensure alignment with the specific needs and expectations of the network. The use of 'before-action reviews' and 'after-action reviews' with JATN staff was a highly effective method for assessing each training's outcomes and planning for the next. This approach facilitated the documentation and management of expectations, ensuring they remained realistic. Moreover, it provided JATN staff with the opportunity to critically evaluate their expectations, making certain they were met in subsequent sessions.

Additionally, the Gender at Work team's critical stewardship role of designing and delivering project interventions must be acknowledged. The Gender at Work team exhibited exceptional adaptability and responsiveness to JATN's evolving needs. Their ability to adjust course, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and the network's leadership transition, demonstrated their unwavering commitment to JATN's success. The presence of dynamic, young women on the Gender at Work team made them more approachable, especially to younger staff members and women, fostering an environment of accessibility and openness. The bond nurtured by the Gender at Work team with member organisations and their individual staff was palpable.

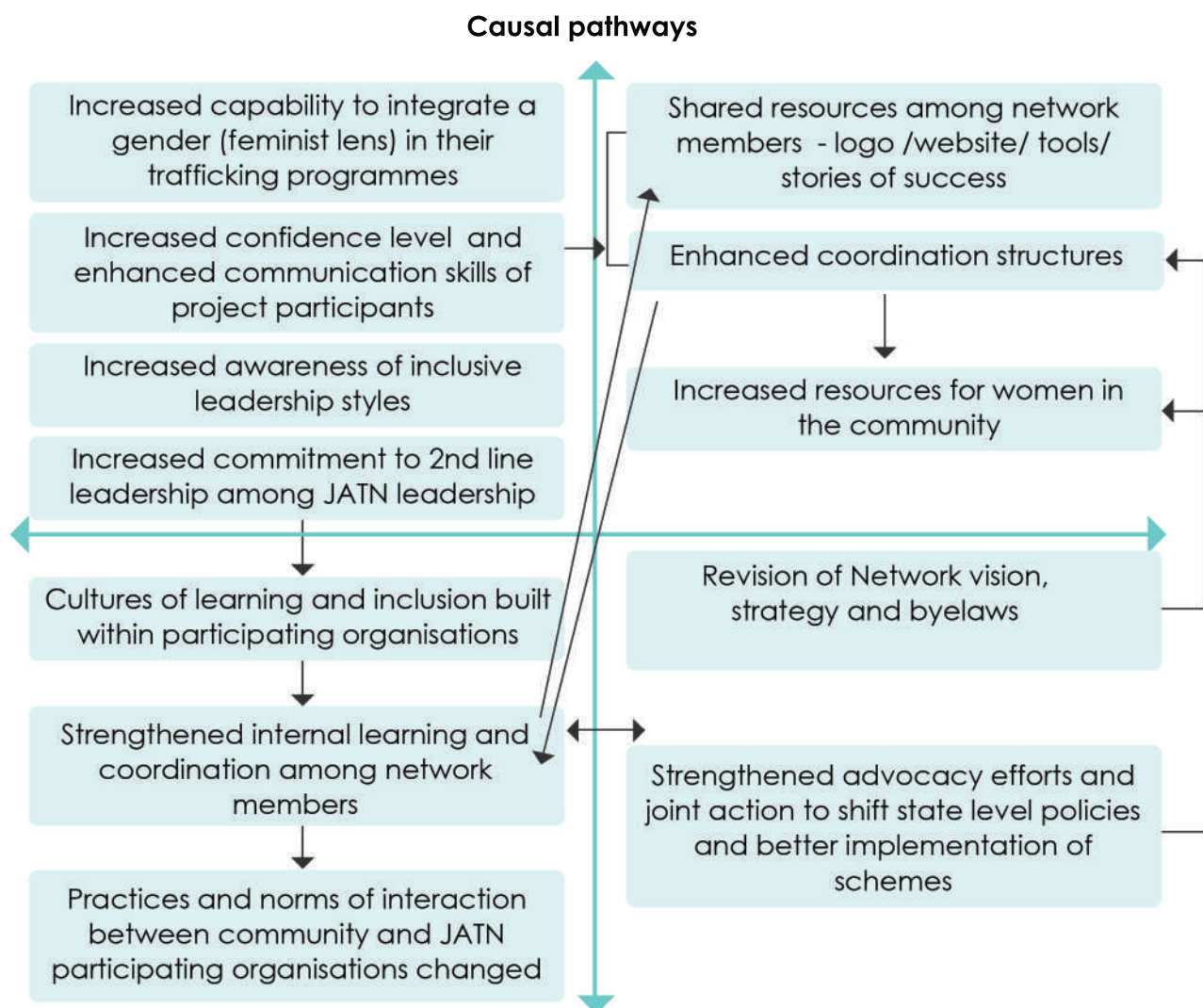
While many strategies proved effective in driving the project forward, there was a specific area where the approach faced a limitation; there was an excessive reliance on the new leadership for supporting project implementation. Broadening engagements from the start might have led to a more diverse leadership structure.



In conclusion, several overarching insights and outcomes emerge:

The project's objectives aligned with the goals of JATN's leadership. Coupled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and FCRA amendments, this underscored the project's vital relevance to JATN.

Significant transformations were recorded across all quadrants of the Gender at Work framework. This was a result of the holistic approach adopted by the project to effect changes at the individual and organisational levels and across formal and informal spheres. Clear causal pathways emerged, linking successes from each quadrant to others (see Figure 2). Enhanced individual capacity not only led to the creation of shared resources for the network but also fostered a culture of learning and collaboration. These gains were formalized into foundational organisational documents and by-laws. Having formal structures in place further contributed to strengthened resources for the network, which in turn amplified collective actions and changed practices and norms of interaction between the community and member organisations.



The most important change was the consolidation of the network, which now has a clear identity, is united around a shared vision, and is anchored by an active core committee steering its actions with robust organisational policies in place. This strengthened network is a vital resource created as a direct outcome of the project.

This strengthening has enhanced collaboration and coordination amongst member organisations, fostering a community of practice characterized by cross and peer learning, collective problem-solving, and collective actions for social change. The project was instrumental in laying the groundwork for embedding a culture of learning, inclusivity, and empathetic functioning, indicating the adoption of feminist ways of working within the network and its member organisations.

Network strengthening trickled down to member organisations as they mirrored the strategies applied at the network level. Consequently, member organisations developed formal policies, bolstered strategic planning processes, and transitioned from a solely project-centric approach to a more systems-oriented and institutional approach.

The project significantly contributed to increasing individual confidence and enhancing capacities. Given the limited resources accessible to CSOs, training and mentorship opportunities provided by the project were of high value. This resulted in improved communication skills, inclusive leadership styles, and a heightened awareness of the need to foster successive leadership. Project participants were introduced to core principles of gender equality and feminist modes of working.

These advancements translated to increased resources for communities. Enhanced negotiation skills facilitated improved implementation of government schemes and policies with benefits directly reaching community members. Efforts also aimed at enhancing leadership at the community level, with a focus on increasing women's leadership. Improvements to documentation efforts enabled JATN and its member organisations to better identify community needs. The strengthened network has initiated state-level advocacy for the realization of the rights of domestic workers and migrant laborers. The intensive support provided by Gender at Work, coupled with JATN's leadership's openness to it, cultivated a deep bond and camaraderie. Despite the project coming to an end, a collective hope echoed that JATN would continue to lean on members of the Gender at Work team and the facilitators. In the words of a first-line leader, "Gender at Work diya jala ne ki kaam ki (lit the flame).

### Key Lessons Learnt

**Holistic Approach:** Employing a holistic systems approach for network strengthening, the project addressed both formal and informal needs, optimally strengthening the network.

**Feminist Methods Applied:** Utilizing discursive and inclusive pedagogies and strategies while ensuring safe spaces cultivated a culture of learning, inclusivity, and empathy.

**Mixed Groups Worked:** Carefully selecting a mix of senior and junior staff members for workshops promoted richer engagements and facilitated inter-generational knowledge transfer.


**Steadfast Support in Challenging Times:** Consistent backing, especially during leadership transitions and external challenges like the pandemic, proved crucial for the stability and development of the network.







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