Executive Summary

THP-India works in eight states, 105 districts and more than 3,500 villages across the country. Through partnerships with 48 community-based organizations, THP-India’s programs indirectly reach an estimated 12 million people.

During this reporting period, THP-India trained 358 newly elected women representatives and coordinated bottom-up gender-focused programs involving 278,703 participants in more than 1,700 program activities in areas of:

- Strengthening Women’s Leadership
- Federation Building
- Making Panchayats Effective
- Influencing Public Opinion
- Advocacy & Alliances

Following the April 2011 Gram Panchayat elections, THP-India conducted a Women’s Leadership Workshop (WLW) in Bihar. In addition to this, THP-India developed an advanced module for WLWs to train women who are elected for the second term. A training of trainers was conducted prior to the WLWs. As a result, in Bihar, due to the involvement of the Elected Women Representatives (EWR) from federations, almost 95 percent of federation members won the elections for the second time.

The formation of the National Coalition against Two Child Norm is a significant achievement. The aim of the coalition is to raise awareness among different stakeholders about the coercive nature of different population control policies and to advocate for their removal from policies and programs at the state and the central level. THP has taken the lead to establish the secretariat of the coalition in the Centre for Health and Social Justice. THP-trained EWRs have also participated in rallies in Bhubaneswar, Odisha to protest against this norm and ask for its removal. In Bihar as well, THP has been part of the Jan Adhikar Manch to strategize to prevent the government from implementing this norm.

In July 2011, Melanne Verveer, United States Ambassador-At-Large for Global Women's Issues, visited the state of Rajasthan to meet and interact with the elected women representatives trained by The Hunger Project. One hundred EWRs of Chaksu and Newai block...
shared with Ambassador Verveer the work done by them on issues of water, girl child education, gender-based violence, disaster management, corruption, food security, health and ensuring accountability in panchayats. The elected women present, a majority of whom have been elected to public offices for the first time, also shared the challenges they face as women leaders in their panchayats and the strategies they use to counter these.

- **THP-India closed the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) partnership in September 2011 upon the successful completion of the two-year project.** In December 2011, UNDEF sent an evaluation team to Rajasthan to review the work done by THP-India. The evaluators met five partners and 35 EWRs trained under this project. The evaluation team acknowledged the excellent work done by THP in Rajasthan and reported it to be a fruitful partnership and a model project.¹

- **THP-India awarded the 11th Sarojini Naidu Prize to three print journalists in three language categories.** The Minister for Rural Development Shri Jairam Ramesh was the chief guest at the occasion. Ms. Mallika Sarabhai, dancer, choreographer and social activist was the guest of honor.

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**Accomplishments**

**Strengthening Women’s Leadership**

- **THP-India successfully completed SWEEP – Strengthening Women’s Empowerment in Electoral Processes in Tamil Nadu.** SWEEP reached out to two million people in 5,321 villages (547 Gram Panchayats) of Tamil Nadu and encouraged citizens to be aware voters, and motivated women candidates to file their nomination papers and participate in the elections as polling and booth agents. Of the women trained by THP, 50 percent filed their nominations and stood for elections. Of those, 46 percent won the elections. THP has played a critical role in ensuring violence-free elections and one of the most significant achievements of the campaign has been that women from a village in Madurai voted for the first time in their lives despite having voting rights since independence in the 1940s.

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¹ Final UNDEF report pending.
EWRs have taken a lead in all Jagruk Manchs as mentors, facilitators and political leaders. *Jagruk Manch* (known as *Sajha Manch* in Madhya Pradesh and *Jagruthi Vedike* in Karnataka) is a platform for both elected and non-elected women at Gram Panchayat (GP) to come together and understand the issues of the panchayats as well as to enhance their civic participation in local government and local development processes. In Madhya Pradesh, *Sajha Manchs* developed and planned strategies to attend Gram Sabha meetings and to build awareness as well as take actions around issues of domestic violence, malnutrition, functioning of the anganwadis\(^2\), Public Distribution System (PDS)\(^3\), and campaigns against alcoholism and sanitation. As a result of this local-level advocacy and awareness campaign, several issues were addressed and resolved pertaining to water and sanitation, allotment of houses under the housing scheme, social security pensions, and ensuring effective service in the anganwadis.

In Karnataka, *Jagruthi Vedikes* have enabled EWRs to garner support of other marginalized women in the GP and include them in decision making processes. *Jagruthi Vedikes* have been able to regularize the supply of PDS ration for families below the poverty line (BPL)\(^4\) of their panchayats. *Jagruthi Vedike* members of Namagondalu Grama Panchayats mobilized women to protest against the irregularities in Gowribidannur. A memorandum was issued to District Health Officer and he has promised a probe into the functioning of the district hospital. In all three states, *Jagruk Manchs* are working as an important platform for EWRs to establish their identity and leadership amongst the citizens of the Gram Panchayats (GP).

Federation members in Madhya Pradesh led a series of successful campaigns to create awareness on malnutrition. In five such campaigns, planned in districts of Chattarpur, Sidhi, Rewa, Katni and Dindori, 350 EWRs disseminated campaign messages in 30 panchayats. While the community was made aware of the endemic problem of malnutrition, they were also informed of ways to deal with it, the role of anganwadi and the availability of government schemes and services. Community members were motivated to access these services. Campaign design, planning and printing of informational materials was done in collaboration with the partner organizations. Interface with administrative functionaries in Odisha, Karnataka and Uttarakhand helped EWRs to strengthen and establish linkages with the local government functionaries. The EWRs have used these platforms to seek information regarding panchayats, government orders, schemes and laws from the officials. In Karnataka, 78 GP Presidents, 65 Vice Presidents and 708 Ward members met eight different district- and block-level officials and tabled issues of substandard food distributed to children in anganwadi centers with the Child Development Program Officer. Issues related to payment of honorariums and sitting fee of EWRs were also raised in these meetings.

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\(^2\) The word Anganwadi means "courtyard shelter" in Hindi. They were started by the Indian government in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child hunger and malnutrition.

\(^3\) This is a targeted distribution system of essential food commodities at very low prices to card holders (economically poor).

\(^4\) The Government of India estimates a Poverty Line based on wholesale prices, and population falling below this line is categorized as BPL. There are BPL cards issued for people falling below this line to receive entitlements under various government schemes.
Formation of National Coalition Against Two Child Norm

- In this reporting period there was considerable media attention around the birth of the seven-billionth baby\(^5\). The reporting around this event seemed somewhat different from the sharp population control rhetoric of the past, but still showed that some of the earlier fears of population growth continue to dominate many minds. At the same time, many state-level processes were not very encouraging. Madhya Pradesh continued its dizzying climb up the sterilization ladder with targets and incentives. A commission on women's development in Kerala, headed by Justice Krishna Iyer, had proposed penalties for women who have three or more children. In Bihar, the state government was contemplating the introduction of Two Child Norm in panchayats. Currently, the norm is prevalent in states like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.

Considering these developments, THP held a meeting of concerned individuals and organizations based in Delhi. On November 25, the group met at the Hunger Project office for a half-day consultation. At this meeting the scenario was reviewed and all present agreed that the situation did call for some action both at the national level and in states where there were continuing concerns. The group felt the need to monitor and respond to the two child norm and other coercive measures and coordinate between and support state-level action against such norms.

The National Coalition on Two Child Norm and Coercive Population Policies was formed to raise awareness among different stakeholders about coercive nature of different population control policies and to advocate for their removal from policies and programs at the state and the central level. The coalition is membership-based and both organizations and individuals can become members of this coalition. The secretariat of the national coalition is housed in the Centre for Health and Social Justice which is headed by Dr. Abhijit Das. THP-India is one of the key supporters of this National Coalition. Initial activities of the coalition include investigating the current status of Two Child Norm and developing a consolidated report of the previous studies that have been conducted in the past. A brochure is being developed, a blog has been started\(^6\), and the membership base is currently at 25 members and increasing.

Challenges

Strengthening Women’s Leadership
- The biggest challenge has been the delayed sanction of funds by UN Women due to which work started only mid-November.
- To engage and train the reelected women, the advanced WLW module went through several iterations before it was finalized

Influencing Public Opinion
- The success of a campaign like SWEEP is largely dependent on selection and active involvement of partners.

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\(^6\) [http://coalitiontcn.wordpress.com](http://coalitiontcn.wordpress.com)
Training of tribal women needs a different strategy altogether. This has come out from the experience from tribal areas.

Non-reservation of seat for the post of Vice President in Tamil Naidu is a challenge to women candidates especially from marginalized communities.

Advocacy & Alliances
- Galvanizing and mobilizing government functionaries, bureaucrats and the political class continues to be a challenge.
- In Odisha, EWRs have not been able to meet the Chief Minister on the issue of Two Child Norm.
- Accessing data from the state government and the concerned departments on the actual number of cases registered and removed under Section 40 in MP has been difficult.
- Vested interest groups and panchayat secretaries in several panchayats proved to be an obstacle as they did not want the standing committee to play an active role in the panchayat. However this was addressed through dialogue, and support was extended by the panchayat department at the block and district level to make the training successful.
- There was resistance to accept the issue of climate change as a reality owing to low levels of awareness.

Lessons Learned

Strengthening Women’s Leadership
- To ensure quality of work, sustain and motivate partner staff, and keep momentum in the field, an even cash flow of funds is a must.

Influencing Public Opinion
- Delay in disclosure of exact election date in Tamil Nadu made it difficult to plan activities in advance and first-time contestants in Tamil Nadu feared the presence of local politicians and were wary of the usual male and caste domination.
- Motivating EWRs to re-contest in the elections because of their earlier experience, family pressure, fear of money power, change of multiple wards into single wards and presence of political parties.
- Motivating women to contest fairly in a scenario where money was spent lavishly to dole out freebies was a big challenge.

Advocacy & Alliances
- Advocacy needs constant lobbying and interaction with the Government and other stakeholders. THP needs to sustain the momentum otherwise it starts to wane.
- The stakeholder group needs to be vast so as to be inclusive and ensure voices of different interest groups.
Country By Numbers: India*

* All data presented herein is taken directly from the internal online Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) System, updated quarterly by Program Country M&E Officers. The Global Office works continuously with each M&E Officer to audit and verify this data.

THP-India works with 48 partner countries in 8 states across India. Because project-based Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are not based on a calendar year and reporting cycles vary, cumulative activities here provide only a snapshot of THP-India’s full program. Activities for EWRs span a five year time-frame based on local election cycles.
Partner Story
Sanjha Manch Members Take Action to Protect Panchayat Land

In the Parwa Panchayat of the Harda District in Madhya Pradesh, Sanjha Manch has managed what previous panchayat bodies have failed to do. It was instrumental in removal of illegal encroachment on panchayat land designated for performing last rites of the dead.

For years residents were forced to cremate the deceased in an isolated patch of land or in the neighboring panchayats. In the first Gram Sabha after the Sanjha Manch was formed, the issue of not having such a designated land in Parwa was raised by Sanjha Manch members. All Gram Sabha members present supported this cause. Sarpanch of the Panchayat, Sangeeta Naik had already discussed this in the panchayat meeting in which all members had unanimously passed a resolution.

The idea of raising it in the Gram Sabha was to discuss this in a larger group and designate a land for it. The only available land was under the illegal possession of one Haribhajan, a powerful person in the Panchayat. Several Gram Sabha members were scared of talking to the encroacher and advised the Sarpanch to look for other land. However, since the decision had already been taken and a Gram Sabha resolution was passed with majority of votes, Sangeeta decided to go ahead and press the Haribhajan. Her fellow Manch members assured her of their support in this campaign.

According to a pre-planned strategy, at first, an official notice was given to Haribhajan from the Panchayat and he was asked to remove his things from the land within a stipulated time period. When he failed to do so, a complaint was lodged in the offices of Sub-Divisional Magistrate and Janpad Panchayat. Haribhajan lodged a false police complaint against Sangeeta accusing her of trying to usurp his ‘ancestral land.’ He also began threatening people supporting her.

Around the same time, a young child died in the village and his family members took his dead body to the land designated for burial. Haribhajan scared the bereaved family and kicked them off the land. When the family, after performing last rites of the child elsewhere, came and informed the Sarpanch about this, all Sanjha Manch members, and some community members signed on a letter informing the collector about this incident.

Sunita, a Sanjha Manch member, says, “We were tired of waiting. Block administration was not taking any steps. We hoped that with this letter the district administration would finally wake up and take action.” And Sunita was right.

Under instructions from the Collector, all encroachments were removed in the presence of Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the police. On protesting against the Collector’s dictate, Haribhajan was jailed for seven days. The community at large was both amazed and happy at this victory of the Sanjha Manch. For the members, it was a time to celebrate their collective strength and congratulate each other for

7 (also known as Jagruk Manch)
sticking together in this intense and difficult battle. For the community it is a blessing to now have the land rightfully dedicated for burial.

**Partnerships, Advocacy and Events**

**Advocacy & Events**

- Rita Sarin, Country Director, THP-India met with the newly appointed Minister of Panchayati Raj Shri. V. Kishore Chandra Deo in December 2011. Shri Deo also holds the portfolio of Tribal Affairs. Ms. Sarin shared the work of THP and updated him regarding the various demands of the elected women representatives.

- Director Sriparna G. Chaudhuri and Programme Officer Veda Bharadwaj met with the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India Mr. Hrushikesh Panda in connection with the Two Child Norm in Odisha.

- On July 20, 2011 in Bihar, THP was invited by the State Panchayat Performance Assessment Committee (SPPAC) to attend a key meeting to discuss the criteria for selecting the best Panchayats in Bihar. SPPAC has been formed under the guideline of Panchayati Raj Department with the aim to encourage Panchayati Raj and award the Panchayats for their successful implementation. The meeting of SPPAC was called by the Principal Secretary and, upon THP’s recommendation, the department included rates of child marriage as an important criterion to assess the performance of the Panchayats. Panchayats with zero child marriages would be rated the best.

- THP Programme Officer in Tamil Nadu attended the session of the Legislative Assembly (TNLA) in August 2011. In this session, the Chief Minister announced the dates for the Gram Panchayat elections and also discussed other issues pertaining to the administration of local bodies and a policy note.

**During this reporting period THP-India was engaged in funding partnerships with the following organizations:**

- UN Women
- UNDEF (though this project has successfully came to a close)
- Ribbink Van Den Hoek Foundation
- Forum Syd
- Goudriaan Family
- CORDAID

THP-India has written and submitted proposals to the Dutch Government (FLOW), CORDAID and Forum Syd (ODISHA).
Future Plans

- **Strengthening Women’s Leadership**: Review meetings with federation leaders at block level; block level interface meetings with government officials and the media; advanced WLWs for newly elected EWRs in Bihar; planning meetings for partners in Tamil Nadu; wrap-up SWEEP activities in Odisha; roll-out of program in Karnataka under CORDAID partnership; conduct radio program on Gram Sabha Mobilization in Rajasthan; needs-based workshops in Maharashtra.

- **Influencing Public Opinion**: Host key exposure visits of federation leaders in Uttarakhand; annual release of the Sarojini Naidu Prize Announcement; key meetings with the Minister of Local Governance and Democracy of Norway, UNDEF, CitiBank and the Prime Minister’s Advisor.

- **Advocacy & Alliances**: Final preparations will be made to establish the National Coalition Against the Two Child Norm (regarding structure, membership, roles and responsibilities); submission and review of draft reports on Section 40.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: THP-India will work to further streamline the M&E process; implement a simple Management Information System to track and monitor activities at the state/partner level; and provide M&E training to state teams and other partners.