

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA



OPERATIONALISING SHAKTI VARTA: PROGRESS AND  
PROCESS





# Operationalising Shakti Varta: Progress and Process

March, 2014



**Submitted by**

Technical and Management Support Team  
on behalf of  
Government of Odisha



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## Executive summary

**What is Shakti Varta?** : Shakti Varta is an innovative community based programme aimed at reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and child malnutrition, and improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices. It builds on Odisha specific and Indian evidence of the effectiveness of using a participatory learning and action (PLA) approach to support women's groups identify and prioritise their health problems and take action to address them. Building on the capacities of Mission Shakti federations and Self Help Groups (SHG), Shakti Varta has been designed to cover a cycle of 20 PLA meetings that lead SHG and non-SHG women and adolescents through a reflective learning process around maternal and newborn health, child nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

**How is Shakti Varta delivered?** : Local women are trained to facilitate the PLA meetings using interactive approaches such as stories, picture cards and games that facilitate discussion and stimulate action. To support the programme an institutional and implementation structure was developed that includes four Block Coordinators to provide training and supervision support to facilitators, and monitor implementation. The Block Coordinators are drawn from the Block Federation, ICDS, and two from a facilitating district NGO, respectively.

**Where does Shakti Varta fit in to Government?** : Shakti Varta is a convergent programme led by the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) working in coordination with the Department of Health and Family Welfare (DHFV), the Department of Rural Development (DRD), and Mission Shakti. The State Intersectoral Committee oversees the programme and is chaired by the Development Commissioner with representation from the three nodal departments. At the Committee's first meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2013, it approved the broad design of Shakti Varta and the institutional and implementation structure. A decision was taken to implement Shakti Varta in 15 nutrition High Burden Districts at an estimated outlay of Rs.44.54 crores of which Rs.28.71 crores be allocated from the financial assistance allocation of Odisha Health and Nutrition Sector Programme (OHNSP). Government agreed to initially implement the programme in the three high infant mortality districts of Kandhamal, Rayagada and Balangir, and then to scale up to 12 additional districts.

**What is the status of the technical, financial, operational, information and evaluation guidelines and plans?** : Following approval from the Intersectoral Committee, the three nodal departments with technical assistance from TMST and EKJUT, designed the content of the PLA meeting cycle and developed training packages, materials and created a state level resource pool to support master training. Financial disbursement plans, and financial and operational guidelines have been developed. A management information system, and quantitative and qualitative process evaluations have been designed. The quantitative evaluation of Shakti Varta is nested within the Concurrent Monitoring Survey and fieldwork is under way. Qualitative assessments will be undertaken at junctures throughout the PLA cycle in both first and second wave districts, and all preparations for the first qualitative study are ready.

Progress has been made in establishing the technical assistance structures for the programme. A state level technical agency has been hired to provide overarching support. TMST has placed SHG PLA Coordinators as part of its district teams to support Shakti Varta, and completed procurement of district NGOs in the first wave districts. The district NGOs will provide coordination, training, supervision and quality assurance inputs.

**What is the status of implementation?** : The Honourable Chief Minister of Odisha launched Shakti Varta at the state level, and District Collectors in the three start up districts on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2013,

In the first three start up districts, the implementation structures have been readied: district and block officials and Mission Shakti district and block federations have been oriented; Block Coordinators have been identified and their training started; and GP facilitators have been selected. District level action plans for fund placement have been submitted, and block-level micro training plans prepared. The first PLA meetings are expected to begin in March 2014 and under the best case scenario the full cycle will be completed by end March 2015.

In the second wave districts, TMST's district teams have started the preparatory work of orientating district and block officials and Mission Shakti federations. Selection of Block Coordinators (460) and GP facilitators (4380) are under process. Proposals for facilitating NGOs have been evaluated and due diligence is in process; NGOs are expected to be contracted by mid-April. At the very earliest, meetings will begin in the twelve districts in July. This means that in the best case scenario the full cycle of meetings will finish by end June 2015.

**Risk** of slippage in implementation over the next six months is high. Risks include:

- i. Procurement: delays in contracting NGOs to support the second wave of 12 districts.
- ii. Training implementation: slippage in the training plan due to delays in identifying facilitators in all GPs, and difficulties in preparing blocks which have weak capacity to support implementation.
- iii. Launch of PLA meetings: delay in launch of meetings as facilitators need more time to identify SHG sites for Shakti Varta, compounded by the non-availability of functioning SHGs in some areas.
- iv. Late release and disbursement of funds.
- v. Delays due to elections and other exigencies.

**Looking forward:** There is a strong possibility that the PLA meeting cycle will not be completed in all 15 districts before DFID financial assistance closes. This has financial and operational implications for the programme, and will impact the evaluation strategy, and learning. It is therefore recommended that various scenarios be developed to assist Government in planning for the logical completion of the PLA cycle, and evaluation activities.

## List of Acronyms

CDPO	Community Development Project Officer
DFID	UK Department for International Development, UKAID
DHFW	Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha
DRD	Department of Rural Development, Government of Odisha
DSWO	District Social Welfare Office
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha
GP	Gram Panchayat
HBD	High Burden District
HNWASH	Health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Service
MIS	Management information system
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NOP	Nutrition Operational Plan
OHNSP	Odisha Health Nutrition Sector Programme
PLA	Participatory learning and action
Rs.	Indian Rupees
RMNCH+A	Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child health and adolescence
SHG	Self Help Group
TA	Technical assistance
TMST	Odisha Technical, Management Support Team
TOR	Terms of Reference
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

## **A. Introduction**

Shakti Varta is an innovative programme of the Government of Odisha that aims to improve maternal and newborn health and child nutrition and WASH practices by working with women's Self Help Groups (SHGs). At the heart of Shakti Varta is a participatory learning and action (PLA) approach that leads group members through a reflective process, known as a PLA cycle, to assess and prioritise their local health, nutrition, and water and sanitation (HNWASH) problems, develop local strategies for action, and review their achievements. This report documents the progress made in the design, development and operationalisation of Shakti Varta, and the process that has been followed.

## **B. Background**

Odisha, India and regional experience has proven that participatory learning and action approaches delivered through women's groups can reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. PLA as a method of behaviour change aims to be transformational, in contrast to information giving forms of communication that involve much less scope for interaction, reflection, and questioning. PLA is therefore an appropriate methodology where informational gaps interact with social and cultural inhibitors to change, and affecting the social norms that underpin HNWASH behaviours are pivotal to raising poor demand for services and improved practices. Evidence shows that PLA is most effective when targeted to underserved areas.

Given the HNWASH priorities and socio-cultural context of the state, a PLA cycle integrating elements of health, nutrition and WASH has been developed for Odisha that:

- Builds on Odisha, Indian, and international evidence of the effectiveness of PLA for improving health and nutrition outcomes, and its limitations.
- Draws on Ekjut's experience and expertise of how PLA can be effectively operationalised in communities in Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and other Indian states.
- Focuses on improving family and community practices to reduce child malnutrition, and improve newborn and maternal health, including hygiene practices.

## **C. Shakti Varta design**

Shakti Varta has been designed through a consultative process involving stakeholders from across government including the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), the Department of Health and Family Welfare (DHFV), and the Department of Rural Development (DRD); development partners including DFID; and national and international technical experts. This has included various consultative workshops, meetings and brainstorming sessions amongst different stakeholders, as well as field visits to PLA sites in Odisha and Bihar. The objective has been to build consensus on the content, design, structure, operation and budget of the PLA approach and to develop a PLA meeting cycle that is simple and doable, and tailored to the Odisha context. Given the

scale and innovation of Shakti Varta, and the multiple stakeholders involved, a well-laid out and planned approach has been imperative.

Key elements of the design process are presented below.

### **SHG assessment**

To inform the design of the programme, and assess the capacity of SHGs to absorb a PLA approach, an assessment of SHGs and federations was undertaken in Bolangir, Kandhamal, and Raygada Districts; the three districts where implementation of Shakti Varta will begin. The assessment took an exploratory approach, drawing on secondary data to map the presence of SHGs and their federations, as well as undertaking primary data collection in selected sites.

The study found that SHGs have been functioning in the three districts for several years -- on average seven -- they meet regularly, and have strong linkages with banks and government schemes: attributes which provide a sound basis on which a PLA cycle can be nested. SHGs meet monthly and separate PLA meetings will need to be programmed, but given the expressed interest of SHG members to work on HNWASH issues, the study concluded that this seems feasible, though an important point to be monitored. In line with the composition of the local population, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste members dominate the social make-up of SHGs, their executive committees, and subsequently the GP, block and district federations; and provide a vehicle to reach disadvantaged households. One of the main operational weaknesses of SHGs was found to be the poor maintenance of records and registers; reflecting low literacy skills, and the need for training. For Shakti Varta, this means PLA materials will have to be tailored to non-literate populations, and delivery of training and the pace of implementing the PLA cycle designed accordingly.

Block level federations are significantly stronger than lower level Gram Panchayat (GP) ones. All were found to be registered, have bank accounts, and experience of managing funds. Regular meetings are held, generally conducted by the Community Development Project Officer (CDPO), and records and registers are well maintained. Most block federations also have access to infrastructure for meetings, and a functional computer. The majority of block level federation members have received basic skills training, and provide training to others; this is a potential resource from which PLA block coordinators can be drawn. Weaknesses do exist in their functioning, such as the low self-generated corpus, and the irregular payment of membership fees by GP federations, but the study concluded that overall, block federations provide a viable platform for supporting the coordination, management, training and supervision of SHG PLA interventions.

All three of the district level federations studied are registered with bank accounts, and are closely connected to district authorities. While this encourages liaison and access to Government schemes, it also means that the focus, operation and management of the federation tend to be driven by the district administration. In general, the study found a weak understanding of the role and objectives of district federations among its members. The district federations operate from the District Social Welfare Office (DSWO), with no separate space or facilities.

## PLA cycle and its delivery

The PLA cycle, which is central to Shakti Varta, was designed with the technical assistance of TMST and EKJUT, and in coordination with the Department for Women and child Development, Department of Health and Family welfare, Department of Rural development, and DFID. The Shakti Varta cycle builds on the PLA cycle that EKJUT trialled in Odisha and Jharkhand to reduce maternal and newborn health, but is adapted to also address child malnutrition and the underlying determinant of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

The cycle consists of 20 meetings arranged into two mini-cycles of reflection, first on maternal and newborn health, and then secondly on nutrition and WASH. Additional to the 20 SHG meetings, the Shakti Varta SHG facilitates a community meeting and participates in a Gram Panchayat level meeting alongside other Shakti Varta groups in the GP. It is planned that the PLA meetings will be conducted twice a month. Each Shakti Varta group is estimated to cover a 500 population.

Using engaging interactive tools such as story-telling, picture cards and games, the PLA meetings will be delivered by local women who will be trained to be facilitators. Two facilitators will be engaged per Gram Panchayat and they will each cover a maximum of 10 SHGs. It will take approximately 12-15 months to cover the entire 20 meetings including two community meetings. Each month they will facilitate two meetings per SHG. The facilitators will be trained at five intervals across the span of the PLA cycle so that new information can be shared, skills developed over time, and training sessions used to discuss and solve issues coming up from the community.

The fortnightly Shakti Varta meetings will be between 1.5 to 2 hours in length. SHG members and other women and men in the community, particularly pregnant and lactating women, women with children below two years and adolescent girls will be informed about the time and venue of the meeting one day prior to the meeting by the Shakti Varta facilitator, and encouraged to attend.

## Coverage and financial plan

At the first State Intersectoral Committee meeting in February 2013, the Government decided to roll Shakti Varta out to the State's 15 nutrition High Burden Districts (HBD) in two waves. The first wave will cover the three high infant mortality districts of Kandhamal, Rayagada and Balangir by March 2013, and to scale the programme up to 12 additional districts by September 2013.

The total budget outlay for the programme was calculated at Rs. 44.54 crores.

	Number of Districts	Population	Number of Blocks	Number of Villages
Wave I	3	3 342 000	37	7000
Wave II	12	14 249 000	115	17000
Total	15	17 591 000	152	24000

## Institutional and implementation structure

The design of the institutional and implementation structure of Shakti Varta took into account the findings of the SHG assessment study, the capacity of Mission Shakti and line agencies. The design of the structure includes:

- i. Oversight and leadership by the State Intersectoral Committee chaired by the Development Commissioner and including the three nodal departments.
- ii. At the state level, Department of Women and Child Development lead implementation in collaboration with Department of Health and Family Welfare and Rural Development, and in partnership with Mission Shakti. Technical support is to be provided by TMST and a state level technical agency. The technical agency is to support the development of PLA tools, PLA kits, training materials, delivery of master training, and to develop a pool of around 20 resource persons. Independent technical agencies will support evaluation and documentation.
- iii. At the district level, the District Intersectoral Committee oversees Shakti Varta. Mission Shakti's District Federation, TMST's District technical team, and a District NGO will support implementation. The District NGO will provide coordination, training, supervision and quality assurance inputs.
- iv. At the block level, four Block Coordinators cum Master Trainers (two from the selected District NGO, one from the Block Federation, and one ICDS Supervisor) will form a resource pool to coordinate, train, supervise and quality assures implementation.
- v. At GP level, two local women will be trained as Shakti Varta SHG facilitators to facilitate the delivery of the PLA cycle of meetings with SHGs.

## D. Launch of Shakti Varta

The Honourable Chief Minister at the state level,, and Collectors of the first three start up districts launched Shakti Varta on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2013.

## E. Progress in establishing the institutional and implementation structure

### State level:

**The State Intersectoral Committee** was constituted and held its first meeting on 4th February 2013. It approved the broad design of Shakti Varta, and the institutional and implementation structure.

**Technical assistance:** TMST has hired the state technical agency to support the implementation of Shakti Varta; and hired SHG PLA coordinators to work as part of TMST's district teams. TMST has designed the Shakti Varta management information system; the evaluation approach; financial and operational guidelines; financial disbursement plan; and produced PLA materials to support

implementation, and MIS tools. TMST has hired NGOs to support implementation in the first three districts, and is in the process of procuring NGOs for the second wave of 12 districts.

**The State TA resource pool** has been formed with nine SHG PLA Coordinators, and Nutrition Operational Plan (NOP) team members. They have received the first phase of Shakti Varta training, and imparted 6 batches of training to Block Coordinators in the first three districts.

#### **District level:**

**The existing Joint Co-ordination Committees have agreed to work as District Intersectoral Committees.** In the first three districts where implementation has started, the committees are reviewing progress each month.

**District implementation:** The District Social Welfare Officer under DWCD has been assigned as the programme's nodal officer at the district level. TMST's SHG PLA Coordinators have facilitated a district implementation group in the first three districts.. Activities undertaken include sensitisation and orientation of district and block officials, and orientation of District NGOs hired to support implementation. All CDPOs, Block Supervisors, and Mission Shakti Coordinators have been oriented in each of the first wave districts, and have been involved in selection of Block Coordinators and nomination of Gram Panchayat Facilitators. CDPOs have prepared a microplan of their respective blocks for fund disbursement and programme management.

**Mission Shakti district and block federations** have been oriented in the three first wave districts.

#### **Block level:**

**Block Coordinators:** In the first three districts, the process of identifying Block Coordinators from SHG federations and DWCD has been completed.

#### **Gram Panchayat level:**

**Shakti Varta SHG facilitators** have been identified in the first three districts with the support of the Mission Shakti Coordinator at Block level, CDPO and federations. SHG members identified among themselves who can take on the role of GP facilitator. Candidates were interviewed by Mission Shakti Coordinators, candidates agreed, and names submitted to CDPOs.

#### **Village level:**

**Mapping** of Mission Shakti SHGs was undertaken as part of the SHG assessment and will be validated by GP facilitators once field level work begins, and before the Shakti Varta meetings start.

## **F. Progress in establishing financial and operational procedures**

The budget outlay with the fund disbursement plan for each department was discussed in the first Intersectoral Committee meeting held on 4th February 2013. The budget outlay for implementing the project in 15 nutrition HBDs was estimated at Rs.44.54 crores. It was agreed that Rs.28.71 crores would be allocated from the financial assistance allocation under Odisha Health, Nutrition Sector Programme (OHNSP) to be supported through DWCD and DHFW.

The second meeting of the OHNSP Project Steering Committee held on 15th May 2013 agreed and approved a budget of Rs.17.23 crores for the financial year 2013-14. It was agreed that Rs.13.87 crores would be provided from DWCD and Rs.3.36 crores from DHFW. It was decided that the disbursements will be made according to the Financial and Operational Guideline, and funds placed in districts upon submission of district action plans.

Financial assistance will be utilised on the payment of Shakti Varta SHG facilitator fees, purchase of office stationery at block level, registers and formats for Shakti Varta meetings, flex/banner to be used in the meetings, and monitoring and supervision costs of the two nominated Block Coordinators from the Block Federation and ICDS respectively.

The Financial and Operational Guideline set out the mechanism to allow the flow of funds, the financial reporting structure, and roles and responsibilities of officials at different levels, accounting procedures to be followed, and books of accounts to be maintained at different levels. It also includes standardised forms and formats to be used for recording and reporting financial and physical data.

The Financial and Operational Guideline, the disbursement plan for the first wave of three districts and second wave of twelve districts for the financial year 2013-14, were presented to the Director, Social Welfare on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013, and subsequently submitted to the Financial Advisor (FA) to Secretary, DWCD for approval.

After several rounds of discussions with the FA to Secretary, DWCD, and based on his recommendations, the budget heads of the Shakti Varta programme were recast and revised. The FA directed that assets that were to be placed at the Block Resource Centre -- such as computer peripherals, public address kit and office furniture -- be removed from the budget. The budget line items for the Block Resource Centre were revised, and provisions were made for registers and formats for Shakti Varta meetings, flex/banner to be used in the meetings. Provisions for purchase of office stationery at block level were substituted against contingencies as per the directions of the FA to Secretary, DWCD.

The finalised Financial and Operational Guideline and the recast budget for Financial Assistance estimated at Rs.28.15 crores were agreed by the FA to Secretary, DWCD on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2013, and placed for approval to the Secretary, DWCD. The sanction order for the release of Rs.2.31 crores for the first wave of three districts has been issued by the FA to Secretary, DWCD to MVSND vide Letter No.24940 dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.

## **G. Progress in procuring State Technical Agency and District facilitating NGOs**

- State Technical Agency has been procured and inception phase completed.
- NGOs to support implementation in three districts have been procured and are operational.
- NGO proposals to support implementation in second wave of 12 districts have been evaluated and due diligence process initiated.

The process for procuring NGOs has taken longer than expected due to unavoidable delays in procurement. This has impacted operations, which are process and time intensive, and has implications for the implementation timeline, which are discussed below.

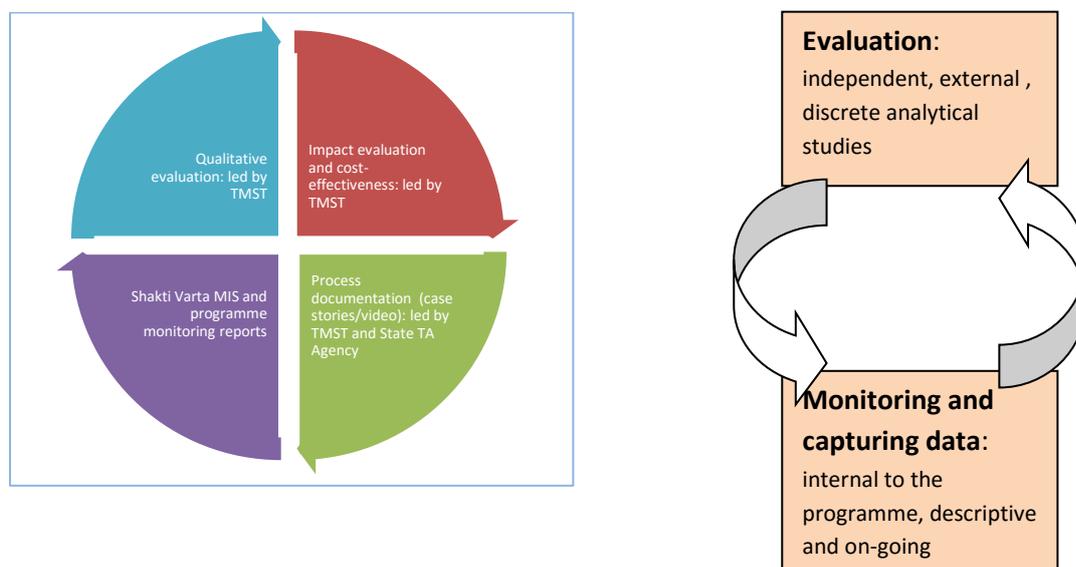
## H. Progress in preparation of materials and resources

- The training manual for the first mini-cycle on maternal and newborn health has been finalised.
- The manual for the Shakti Varta facilitators is close to finalisation. Phase I of the manual which covers maternal and newborn health is complete, and phase II which covers nutrition and WASH has been submitted for review by the state Technical Agency and TMST sectors. Following this, a consultative meeting will be held with government counterparts to finalise the phase II manual and related materials.
- Picture cards tailored to the Odisha context have been developed and printed for Phase I and Phase II is under development.

## I. Progress in establishing the monitoring and evaluation framework

Shakti Varta has four main sources of knowledge generation as shown in the diagram below.

Diagram 1: Knowledge platform



**Monitoring:** The monitoring information system (MIS) has been designed and documented. The information captured by the MIS includes attendance at meetings, the profile of attendees, attendance of frontline workers, and topics discussed. Some qualitative information on progress is also being collected on a regular basis.

**Progress in establishing the evaluation system:** The process of conceptualising, designing, implementing and evaluating Shakti Varta is being documented. This will provide an evidence base

to track decisions taken by Government and DFID, and will be a component of the knowledge management platform.

#### **Quantitative evaluation of PLA:**

The quantitative component of the Shakti Varta evaluation is nested within the Concurrent Monitoring (CCM) survey undertaken in all blocks of Odisha. The only difference is that a greater number of respondents will be sampled per block for the PLA evaluation to measure the impact of Shakti Varta on health, nutrition and WASH outcomes. The quantitative evaluation has a quasi-experimental design using 52 intervention and 52 group matched control blocks. Sample size is larger in these blocks to allow detection of 17% reduction in neonatal mortality in intervention compared to control (based on evidence of effect from cluster RCTs, reduced to account for likely reduced effectiveness from scaling up through government systems). This requires coverage of 500 births in each evaluation block in the last 12 months.

The baseline survey fieldwork has been launched and is due to be completed by July 2014 with data likely to be available in September.

#### **Qualitative process Evaluation:**

Qualitative evaluation studies form a key part of the evidence base that will be generated to measure and explain the performance and effects of Shakti Varta. The studies will be particularly important for understanding the extent to which the programme can be integrated into existing institutions and sustained by government, and testing out the theory of change on which Shakti Varta rests. Data collection for the process evaluation will be administered periodically during and after the 20 meetings of the PLA cycle in both first and second wave districts. This broadly includes:

- i. Qualitative assessment of the grounding of Shakti Varta to be undertaken after the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in the PLA cycle.
- ii. Interim rapid assessment of the performance of Shakti Varta including early signs of effect, diffusion of messages, participation in PLA meetings, and synergy with other programmes. This assessment will use a mixture of qualitative methods and will be undertaken after the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in the PLA cycle.
- iii. Final rapid assessment of the effects of PLA, diffusion of messages, participation in PLA meetings, and synergy with other programmes. The assessment will use a mixture of qualitative methods and will be undertaken after the 20<sup>th</sup> PLA meeting. A small number of control sites will be included in this rapid assessment as recommended by DFID, and findings will be compared with those from the intervention areas.

Given the large scale nature of the intervention and the required institutionalization of PLA within government systems it is important to collect early process data to assess the quality of PLA implementation. The TOR for undertaking the first qualitative assessment into the grounding of Shakti Varta in the first three districts has been developed and approved by DFID. This study will assess the grounding of women's group meetings (village-level), the extent and quality of

participation, achieved coverage of Shakti Varta, and implementation challenges. The findings of this study will be used to strengthen implementation in the first three districts, and inform roll-out to the 12 phase-II districts. The study findings will also form part of the knowledge base to explain endline outcomes..

All preparatory work for the first qualitative assessment has been undertaken. The study design, methodology, sample size and tools have been prepared, and ethical approval sought. Once meeting three has been completed in the first wave districts, this study will be implemented.

## **J. Current status of implementation of Shakti Varta**

Implementation has been slower than expected, with delays in procurement of the state Technical Agency and District Facilitating NGOs pushing back the start dates in both first and second wave districts.

**Wave I districts:** Substantial efforts are being made to equip the blocks in the first three districts to implement Shakti Varta. Orientation of all block officials and block and district SHG federations has been completed, Block Co-ordinators and GP level Shakti Varta SHG facilitators have been identified, guidelines on finance and operation have been prepared, district level action plans for fund placement have been submitted, and block-level micro training plans prepared. File processing at DWCD has been initiated given that timely approval of funds from DWCD to districts will be essential to initiate block level activity.

At the very earliest, Shakti Varta meetings will begin by end March 2014 in the first three districts depending on the readiness of the blocks. In the best case scenario the full cycle of meetings in wave 1 will finish by end March 2015. A revised roll out plan is annexed for reference.

**Wave II districts:** The structures and financial and operational arrangements are in place to roll out implementation to the 12 districts in the second wave. Facilitating NGOs for the twelve districts are expected to be contracted by mid-April. The district teams have started the preparatory work of mapping SHGs and federations, and orientating districts and blocks. Selection of Block Coordinators (460) and GP facilitators (4380) are under process. At the very earliest, meetings will begin in the twelve districts in July. This means that under the best case scenario the full cycle of meetings will finish by end June 2015.

**Risk** of slippage in implementation over the next six months is considerable. Risks include:

- vi. Procurement: delays in contracting NGOs to support the second wave of 12 districts.
- vii. Training implementation: slippage in the training plan due to delays in identifying facilitators in all GPs, and difficulties in preparing blocks which have weak capacity to support implementation.
- viii. Launch of PLA meetings: delay in launch of meetings as facilitators need more time to identify SHG sites for Shakti Varta, compounded by the non-availability of functioning SHGs in some areas.
- ix. Late release and disbursement of funds.
- x. Delays due to elections and other exigencies.

## **K. Looking forward and recommendations**

Shakti Varta supports the achievement of state goals linked to the Nutrition Operational Plan, RMNCH+A, and Nirmal Odisha Abhijan on sanitation, and embodies a community process approach for convergent action.

As this paper sets out, the structures, human and technical resources, operational procedures and financial guidelines, materials, and monitoring and evaluation systems are ready to support implementation in the 3 + 12 nutrition high burden districts. The revised implementation plan for roll-out to 15 districts is annexed.

Risks to slippage are however high, and there is a strong possibility that the meeting cycle will not be complete in all 15 districts before the current DFID project period ends. Secondly, there is a medium risk that geographical coverage of Shakti Varta will be lower than planned due to implementation constraints (such as facilitator drop-out and NGO staff turnover), and the challenging characteristics of the operating environment including remoteness, difficult to reach, and left-wing affected areas.

### **Enclosures**

1. Minutes of OHNSP Project Steering Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2012
2. Minutes of Intersectoral Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2013
3. Minutes of OHNSP Project Steering Committee meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May'2013
4. Sanction Order for release of funds from FA cum Addl. Secretary, DWCD
5. Budget for Shakti Varta programme with yearly disbursement plan
6. Financial and Operational Guideline for Shakti Varta programme
7. District proceedings and sanctions (Bolangir, Kandhamal & Rayagada)
8. Revised Shakti Varta implementation plan