UNIFEM South Asia Regional Office, New Delhi

CHARCA Final Report: October 2007

I. Background and Context

As one of the technical agencies UNIFEM has provided thematic and technical support on gender issues in CHARCA at various levels. These thematic interventions were meant to enhance knowledge base and capabilities in the programme at the national, state and district levels in partnership with various agencies to address Gender based vulnerabilities to HIV. Concrete outputs included development of resources, developing of training advocacy tools, deepening the knowledge base, besides enlarging the cadre of trained/ sensitized human resources at the local level on issues related to gender and mental health, understanding men and masculinities, sexuality, gender based violence, legal and human rights of positive women.

The interventions in partnership with the lead agencies and their district level partners managed to straddle the widespread geographic coverage and diversity within CHARCA.

Implementation was undertaken through a wide variety of outreach strategies in the six districts. These included starting a dialogue on issues of women's vulnerabilities, building partnerships with ongoing government programmes, with Positive Networks, CBOs and NGOs.
UNIFEM's initiatives for CHARCA can be summarized in three categories: 1) education and awareness-raising efforts 2) advocacy and developing knowledge base 3) capacity building and networking.

1.1 UNIFEM - CHARCA Objectives

1. To enhance knowledge base and capabilities across regional and national levels on the intersection of Gender, human rights, and HIV/AIDS within the context of CEDAW
2. To strengthen data resource on Gender and HIV/AIDS at national level to support CHARCA districts
3. To provide technical support to lead agencies and their partners at district level on Gender issues
4. To enhance leadership and skill development of young women living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS in the project planning and implementation of HIV/AIDS policies and programs at district and national level.

1.2 CHARCA- UNIFEM Partners: Various UNIFEM supported interventions in CHARCA were undertaken by more than 17 thematic agencies and individual technical experts.

1.3 Target Audience:

- Gram panchayat leaders and village representatives
- Community mobilizers, young women in SHGs and Mahila mandals, HIV positive men and women
- Master trainers, peer educators & volunteers High school and college students
- NGO workers, health professionals, women's groups Master trainers, NGO workers, women & youth groups
- Master trainers from the field of psychology, Social work, NGO's working in drug, HIV and substance abuse
- Health professionals, women and youth groups in six CHARCA districts.

2 Activities:

2.1 Advocacy initiatives

UNIFEM had provided technical and knowledge support in various advocacy efforts which were rolled out at the national and district level in the project through public education, creative communication and media advocacy. At the national level some of the government agencies which were partners in advocacy were MWCD and NACO.
The activities included:

- Workshops, seminars in local colleges and NGOs in the districts; Publicity efforts on various events through the Local Media; activities during 16 days Activism (25 Nov. - 9 Dec'06) which included week long national level activities before the International Women's Day culminating with events marking the International Women's Day in Delhi and in the CHARCA districts.
- On request of NACO, public awareness materials highlighting the Feminization of the epidemic and the National response to address the women's and girls vulnerability was developed for the XVI AIDS conference in Toronto in 2006
- As part of the initiative for mainstreaming gender by the Gujarat State AIDS Control Society (GSACS), UNIFEM shared the learning, challenges and opportunities in mainstreaming gender and HIV based on the experiences from CHARCA and other such initiatives. Materials and tools developed in CHARCA for capacity building and IEC for awareness generation were also shared. Inputs were also provided for engendering the state Project implementation plan (PIP) for 2006 by U.P state AIDS control society.
- UNIFEM supported the advocacy initiative for forming linkages and bridging micro-voices to macro-policies between policy-makers and grassroots women during 2nd National Health Assembly held in Bhopal in 2006 on the issues of women's health as a right and the issues of health access of marginalised women including those who were HIV positive.

- In the South Asia regional conference 2006 of interfaith religious leaders and media, experience sharing from CHARCA was also built in

	As part of the 9 month long (from March – Dec.'06) Joint CHARCA-UNIFEM initiative, on the eve of the International Women's Day, 7th March '06, more than two thousand men and women congregated at the Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi to raise awareness, launching a campaign to strengthen the Commitment to reach out to the young men and women, especially from socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society. 1500 youth from colleges and universities and 500 out of college youth participated in the events. The high point of the event was the live performance, by the well-known group, "Euphoria". The theme of this event was "Women in Decision Making"- take control, make decisions with a focus on equality in decision making.

2.2 Knowledge base on Gender and HIV/AIDS strengthened at national level to support CHARCA districts

A variety of advocacy, training and IEC tools were developed to build the knowledge base on the "how and what" of addressing gender, women human rights issues into HIV programmes. These knowledge products were shared with partners and stakeholders at the state and district level in the CHARCA programme in the six districts. These tools were developed in partnerships with some of the leading agencies working in the thematic areas of gender, health and women's empowerment, role of men, legal rights and mental health. The need for standardized resource material for CHARCA partners and stakeholders was met to a large extent which included providing for the district specific resources materials. Translations and adaptations of existing knowledge tools into local languages were used as an effective strategy for education and awareness among different communities and groups.
Key activities under this head have been:

- Compiled a resource directory of 36 modules/manuals on Gender, HIV/AIDS and Human Rights and disseminated to CHARCA district teams Based on a compilation and review undertaken by UNIFEM of IEC/training materials of Gender, vulnerabilities and HIV/AIDS available with the district teams of more than 60 training materials a short listed.
- Resource persons and IEC consultants from six district teams were trained in designing and development of the framework to undertake Gender sensitive review of available training and IEC materials This exercise was done as a two phased national level workshop, at the end of which the district teams came up with a checklist for reviewing and developed a set of advocacy materials for CHARCA with key messages around women and girls vulnerability to HIV.
- Women's Feature Service, a specialized a media agency was supported to develop web based portal on their web site for the media fraternity on gender and HIV/AIDS which also provided information on the Charca Project. The website was launched on International Women's Day March 8th 2004 by the Secretary MWCD.
- A web based resource directory has been developed for NACO. This directory serves as information resource base on the nationally available IEC, training and multi media products which have been whetted under a checklist for quality control and message appropriateness. The web portal is expected to act as a one stop tool for policy makers, activists, and development practitioners.
- Based on the policy round table in 2004 and analysis of the entry points in the main schemes of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD, it was decided to develop a training kit to address the concerns of HIV infected and affected women through the Swayamsiddha and Swa-Shakti Self help groups, ICDS and other programmes run by MWCD. These training modules address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS in the context of women's work, her health and social relationships. These modules have been developed and field tested in few states with technical support from UNIFEM and National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) and New Concepts Information Systems. Printed in English, Hindi and Marathi, these have been widely disseminated to different parts of the country.

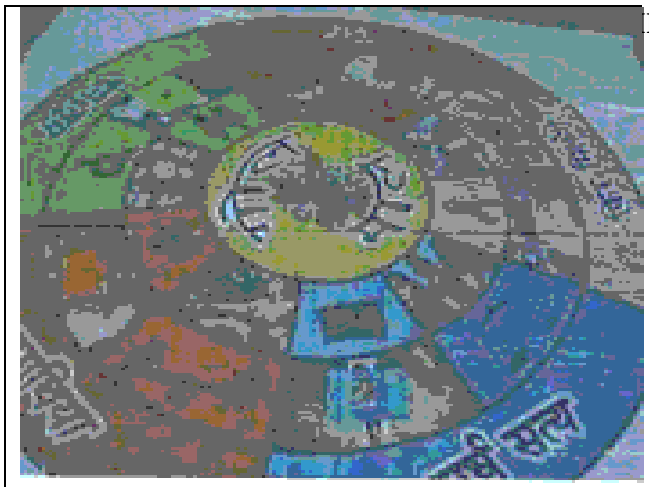
UNIFEM Knowledge products developed/ adapted for CHARCA

Training Guidelines and Modules	Training Manuals	Interactive Training tools	CD based Training modules	IEC Materials	Other products & reports
– Training module on Gender and HIV for Panchayati Raj Institutions (English and Hindi) – Module (Audio visual and a hand book)for para legal trainees (Mizo,	– Gender training manual for Master trainers in Aizawl (Mizo) – Training manual for Peer educators and Peer volunteers (Mizo) – Mental health and HIV – A peer	– Gol Maal Game Board(Eng, Hindi, Telgu, Kannda and Mizo) – Playing cards with information on HIV	– Training CD on Gender and HIV/AIDS (eng and Hindi) – Interactive VCD on understanding masculinities (Eng.) – VCD copies in local languages of	– Posters and hoardings – Radio, television spots – The print ad – Outdoor Hoardings – A series of three Post Cards – Music video with Mizo and Kannada	– IEC web based Resource Directory for NACO – Research and mapping reports/ posters and pamphlets – Monitoring reports with verifiable

Telgu, English and Hindi) – Capacity building Modules on mental health for primary and secondary level trainings Training manual for master trainers (Mizo) – Module on art of parenting (Mizo)	educators handbook(Mizo)		the audio and video products from the "What kind of man are you?" (Eng. and Hindi subtitles)	subtitles	indicators – Process documentation reports

COLLAGE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

Legal Literacy Handbook for People Living with HIV/AIDS
स्त्रियाँ:
एच.आई.वी. / एड्स
की चुनौतियों का
सामना कर रही हैं
Gaining Ground



Interactive board game: 'Golmaal'

An advocacy and training tool in the form of an **interactive board game** named 'Golmaal' was developed and tested with youth groups by UNIFEM thematic partner, **Point of View, a women's rights communication agency** to explore issues of gender, sexuality, violence, and health including HIV. Developed in numerous languages, it has been tested in colleges and slums in Mumbai and in 6 other states. This game is gaining a lot of popular attention and is being used by different sets of organisations and professional working on similar issues. In 2007 the Hindi version of the game has been adapted to make it accessible as a low cost aid by UNIFEM partner SAHAYOG and used and distributed in different districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh by men's groups working to address the gender based violence against women. It has also been adapted and translated in Mizo, Telgu and Kannada.

The evaluation of the game showed that the game format appealed greatly to young people because of its strategy of 'learn while having fun'.**Excerpts from the feedback by the four groups to Gol Maal:**

In Udaipur city, the youth shared that "Debate questions allowed us to understand issues more deeply…we got to know the opinions of our friends about issues that we rarely talk about…there should be more time for debates". Youth from Lok Vikas Samiti shared that the game gave them information and answers about discrimination against women in their society and about man-woman relationships. However, some participants felt that "women and men should not play together because the women don't get an opportunity to talk openly and take the lead".

In Aizawl, one of the youth shared that: "I learnt things that I wanted to know about but didn't know who to ask." Overall, the feedback was that young people needed to have something like this to learn from, which was not in a lecture format. The feedback from the other workshop in Aizawl was that the youth from the North East found the game 'enjoyable, interesting, and very informative'. They said that "it was a great way of making us aware of issues that we don't hear about often." However, there was also a need expressed to have more tough questions.

Advancing work on supportive role of men/issues of masculinity by Aakar:

Work in this thematic area aimed to locate and promote activism and interventions on the theme of masculinities at the district level; to encourage the participation of young men on issues of gender equality and justice; to generate more nuanced understanding with supportive evidence on making masculinities visible in various social and behavioural setting and to produce communication material on the concerned issues.

Work in this area centered around three main interventions-

- Districts visits were made to Aizawl, Udaipur, Kanpur and Bellary in order to understand the ground situation. Orientation sessions were initiated with the implementing agencies at the district level and among others with the group of teachers, NGO activists, health professionals, young people and women's groups interested in working on the theme of masculinities, gender equality, violence and HIV/AIDS.
- Training and advocacy material have been developed that can be utilized by the trainers and young people at the district level.
- Action research in Bellary, Karnataka with the aim to broaden the understanding of masculinities so as to include young boys and men as supportive partners for promoting gender equality and justice.

2.3 To provide technical support to lead agencies and their partners at district level on gender issues.

UNIFEM has supported various training programmes with a variety of stakeholders. These have included training of trainers, master trainers from NGOs college teachers, researchers and doctors; district coordinators and district resource persons. National and state consultations with women's organizations and positive women's representatives were also hosted. These trainings over the project period have covered a wide range of issues such as Reproductive and adolescent health, sexual rights, gender identity and gender relations, women's rights and conventions such as CEDAW, CRC, draft HIV bill, issues of masculinity and supportive role of men, vulnerability of women and girls to HIV, and communications tools and methodology among others. A high level Technical Advisory Committee was established in 2003 to develop training strategies and provide capacity development with members from specialized agencies to build capacities at the district level, with expertise on a diversity of fields in relation to gender and HIV.

Besides being one of the the key partners for providing thematic inputs in the annual planning exercises coordinated by Charca secretariat, UNIFEM also provided strategic inputs for the district programme planning to UNODC in Aizawl and UNFPA in Udaipur in 2004. Some of the prominent of events and workshops at the district level which have been held with the UNIFEM support included:

- In **Aizwal,** in 2006 there was a **musical talent search program** for the youth which received about 1000 entrees and the show was telecasted live during the prime time slot on the local cable channels. It aimed to highlight various messages with regard to the issue of violence against women, HIV awareness and drug abuse.
- In **Bellary** there were orientation programs, seminars reaching out to 100s of people and effective use of the medium of street plays.
- In **Kanpur** city rallies, wall writings, Street plays, quiz programs, film shows, screening of the musical video "Man ke Manjire" and felicitation of change agents were some of the innovative strategies through which an expanded mass of people were reached.
- In **Guntur** too, mass activities like Game shows, rallies, public meetings and workshop were organized to emphasize various issues which saw the involvement of a number of young women. Use of posters and hoardings has also been seen through the project period to increase visibility.
- **Mass Media campaign by Breakthrough:** With an aim to increase awareness among people about linkages between violence against women and women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, male responsibility in the sexual behaviour, prevention, safe sex and advocating for human rights,

mass media campaigns were held in all six districts. This was done through the use of radio, television, hoardings and print media; building the skills of organizations in using the campaigns, media products and designing campaign materials on gender sensitive messages for mass outreach. Based on needs expressed by partners through discussions and feed back session particular products were selected and sent by Breakthrough for wider dissemination among the local populations.

Snapshot of UNIFEM's thematic partnerships:

- **Interventions by MAMTA**

In Kanpur, Mamta provided direct training support to Kanpur DMUs and several stakeholders at various levels including the UPSACS and other senior government officials in the health and education departments. It also played the role of facilitating linkages of CHACRA partners with other youth groups and NGOs from U.P and other states for e.x.. through State Youth Conventions (SYCs).The involvement of Peer Educators in the SYCs helped in developing linkages with other young people and there was sharing of experiences. Young people's capacity was built on folk media which eventually would become an effective medium for carrying the CHARCA objective to the larger community. Good linkages and coordination were established with another NGO, AWARD resulting in better understanding on the issue of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy and linking it with Gender and HIV. MAMTA also undertook the Development of a **Case study docket** in Hindi where the rich experiences of community workers in their long association with communities in the CHARCA districts as well as some other areas has been recorded. This docket is aimed for wider dissemination of field level stories which range from recording the experiences of very young girls associated with the Peer educators groups and Youth Information Centres advocating for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (YRSHR) in Bangalore to HIV infected truck drivers life experiences and struggles in Rewari district in Haryana to rehabilitation of the HIV infected people through Injecting Drug Users and infected blood in Aizawl district.

- **Child In Need Institute(CINI)**

CINI provided technical and training support to Aizwal CHARCA as a resource NGO by enhancing the capacity of the Master Trainers in terms of skill building of the consequent levels of trainers & stakeholders in promoting awareness on gender, health and HIV/AIDS; disseminating information on RCH, gender, HIV and human rights; empowering the community, especially young women and men in prevention and protection and care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, drug and substance abuse.

- **MARG**

With an objective to raise awareness of individual rights from a gender perspective and build capacity of communities through legal literacy to address issues on HIV prevention, care and support this organization has been able to impart legal literacy training to more than one hundred and fifty CHARCA Master Trainers/Peer Educators and other stake holders which includes lawyers, police personnel, teachers, researchers, doctors and PWHAs in four CHARCA districts of Kishganganj, Guntur, Mizoram and Udaipur.

The **impact of the legal trainings** has been positive. It has made the CHARCA workers stronger and has helped them to be better trainers as in the words of a Master Trainer from Kishanganj, *''we are very happy with the legal knowledge we are getting by the trainers and I feel that before this training we were almost handicapped".*

- **Volcomh and SAARTHAK in Mizoram**

The partnership with SARTHAK, a mental health agency for integrating mental health interventions into care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS, in the special context of the North East, with Volcomh has successfully increased awareness among mental health professionals about the linkage between mental health interventions and gender related vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS. Work by this agency has mainly revolved around capacity building and module development on Mental Health Interventions into Prevention, Care and Support Services for People living with HIV/AIDS and the development of training tools for service providers and NGOs working in this field. (see the table on knowledge products)

- **Institute of Social Sciences**

District mapping exercise in Kanpur and Udaipur were conducted to gather information on the role of PRIs to deal with issues of HIV prevention, care and support. Information access and role of PRIs at different levels to address gender, women's human rights, HIV/AIDS and related issues was also looked into. ISS successfully developed a two day training module to enhance capacities of local government Institutions in undertaking programmes on HIV prevention, care and support at the grassroots level.

In addressing HIV/AIDS through Panchayats in the CHARCA districts of Udaipur and Kanpur, it was found that the main challenge here was to rapidly build or strengthen capacities of local government institutions and effectively address target groups (Youths, particularly women in the age of 13 – 24) and enable safer behaviour among them to create an environment free of stigma and discrimination and to address the evolving need of care and support.

2.4 To enhance leadership and skill development of young women living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS in the project planning and implementation of HIV/AIDS policies and programs at district and national level.

- In 2003, in a national consultation with women's groups, positive women's groups 19 representatives from various women's organizations shared resources and expressed interest in strengthening partnership to support CHARCA work in the districts as well across the regions.
- The process of further building the partnership with the positive women's network for facilitating formation of support groups for positive and vulnerable women in CHARCA districts was taken up during the National Consultation hosted by PWN+ on Women Living with HIV/AIDS. This consultation was supported by UNIFEM and other UN agencies. More than 100 positive women from 18 states came together for the consultation that shared their experiences on a common platform and facilitated a deeper understanding of a larger consensus on the needs and issues of women living with HIV/AIDS.
- Linkages were strengthened between the national women's network and the state and district level networks of Positive People in CHARCA districts.

Some of the issues of positive women that have been highlighted as a result of this work include:

- Human rights violations of property rights, especially as most of the widowed WLHA were opposed by their in laws and denied their rightful share of property.
- Access to treatment, especially for STIs.
- Issues of stigma and discrimination as many positive women shared that 'If the community knows about our status nobody is willing to give a house for rent, or allow us to neither come near their houses, nor do they respect us'. Another insight from a sharing was that most people did not take treatment in Guntur district because of discrimination and instead went to Chennai for treatment. Though there were self-help groups of

WLHA functioning in the district, and a few capacity building programmes have been conducted; but despite this, the awareness level regarding HIV was quite low here.

- Safety in intimate relationships and ensuring women's safety in testing and disclosure are the other emerging areas to be addressed

Feed back of Bellary capacity training programme - Some Voices of WLHA

- "From now on I am going to look after my children properly and not focus on how HIV spreads".
- "After coming to this training programme I have got more confidence that I will face whatever difficulties come my way and I have realized that we should not lose hope".
- "From this programme we came to know that there are no medicines available for HIV any where in the world. We came to know that there are no herbal medicines for HIV. Till now we are taking herbal medicines but after this training programme we will stop taking herbal medicines for HIV.
- From this session we learnt to live with our positive status and also learnt not to bother about other people's comments.
- We have got courage to face the world and to engage in available work to take care of our family.
- Before this program we had not heard of ARV Therapy at all. Now we clearly understood about CD4 test and ART".

3. Output and Achievements

- UNIFEM has strengthened and enhanced capacities and built partnerships at the district level with technical inputs from more than 20 gender training and resource organizations and experts on cross cutting gender and rights issues. These initiatives have facilitated in building a cadre of more than 150 trainers equipped to handle gender and equity issues within the human rights framework. Orientation and training programmes reached out to nearly 900 participants across a spectrum of stakeholders. Key outputs from UNIFEM's support for capacity building are:
    1. Increased pool of master trainers on gender & HIV
    2. Standardization, development and Dissemination of gender training modules and IEC materials
    3. Linkages of the district teams strengthened with gender and development agencies working on various aspects concerning gender, media advocacy HIV, Health, sexuality and human rights
- Understanding on few critical but largely unexplored issues around gender based violence and HIV, masculinity and mental health issues within the gender and HIV framework was enhanced in CHARCA.
- Adaptation and developing of innovative IEC, training programmes and Mass media campaigns based on the local contexts and languages proved to be an effective strategy for education and awareness generation among different communities and groups. The need for standardized resource material backup for all CHARCA districts was met to a large extent including providing them support with district specific resources materials as well. 4 training manuals and have been prepared in 5 languages (Eng., Hindi, Telgu, Kannda and Mizo.) 4 CD based knowledge products have also been prepared in English and Hindi. Interactive tools such as game boards and playing cards have also been developed. More than 5000 sets of 5 different posters have been printed and distributed. More than 1000 copies

of other interactive knowledge tools such as Gol maal, playing cards, and other multi media products such as T.V and radio spots and music videos have also been adapted, produced and disseminated.

- A web based IEC portal was created for NACO which is a one stop window for getting the updated IEC materials on various categories with a strong gender and rights perspective.
- UNIFEM supported mass media campaigns and public advocacy initiatives have provided an impressive outreach amongst youth and girls and women in the rural population in CHARCA areas. 5000- 7000 youth were reached out through various campaigns, orientation activities Ownership by the local partners was observed in nearly all the districts.
- Thematic partnerships that were built by UNIFEM have been mutually beneficial for the CHARCA district programme holders and beneficiaries as well as for the agencies themselves. As the district level interventions were enriched by the expertise and experience of these resource agencies of national and international repute in return the resource agencies got an opportunity to work with and address the living and localized contexts of the young people and women on diverse issues in the districts.
- This project enabled UNIFEM to learn from the insights gained especially with regard to the North Eastern region from the Mizoram experience.
- The knowledge and learning from UNIFEM's thematic interventions in CHARCA have been used for developing of the gender inputs in the joint UN support plan for HIV for 20007-11 as well as for sharing with NACO for developing communication, training and advocacy tools for implementation of its third phase of programming (NACP III).

During the monitoring visit to the CHARCA Aizwal project in 2007 by Vandana Mahajan of UNIFEM, the peer educators shared that, "we feel that we have become agents of change by first experiencing the change in ourselves and later influencing our peers and also within their families by being the change icons. The CHARCA team and the Peer educators acknowledged the tremendous value of the support provided by UNIFEM in building the technical capacities at the district level of a wide variety of stakeholders.

3.1 Challenges

CHARCA has been a challenging project due to its multilevel and multi partner institutional model which demanded synergy between the implementing partners and thematic partners from the UN System, government, CBOs and the NGOs which was not easy especially in the first one and half years when the model was being tested as it was being implemented.
The UNIFEM experience of CHARCA has thrown up challenges that are a part of the complexities of joint programming. Some of these relate to:

- **Duration of the project and issues of sustainability**

The complex range of gender dimension within the socio-cultural contexts that are dealt with under CHARCA would require more time than a project bound time frame of three years. This is because processes and skills related to masculine, feminine notions of behavioral practices and accepted norms, building positive mental health and changing gender roles, addressing deep rooted discriminatory behavioural and cultural norms against women and other marginalized communities- all of these demand for sustained nurturing and commitment, which cannot be timed within a short term perspective.

- **Weak planning and information loop between thematic agencies and the programme implementation on the ground**

In the design of CHARCA institutional delivery and programme management, thematic agencies had to wait for the request for inputs from the implementing partners and that process of hooking up of the thematic UN bodies with the district units and their specific needs was the weak link of the programme planning and implementation. Since thematic agencies didn't have direct access during the programe planning and implementation therefore it was a challenge to perceive where, when and how the needs for thematic inputs which had implications on the delivery and efficiency of providing thematic interventions.

- **Playing a cross cutting technical role** has been challenging. It demanded synergy building across diverse experiences and starting points and geographical locations.Differential pace of different stakeholders has its impact for developing common perspective, approaches and methodologies

- **How to leverage UNIFEM and its partners vast experiences on gender, development and HIV and network with wider women's organisations and movement?**

Conclusion

The lessons learnt from CHARCA have the potential for replication and scaling-up of some of its best practices with regards to advancing the experience of gender based programming in HIV/AIDS in India and the sub-region. Through its joint approach, CHARCA programme is an honest attempt help move towards **one and stronger, more effective and responsive UN system in alignment with the national priorities.**

The change due to interventions in CHARCA from all the partners concerned is definitely being felt based on the end line survey results but it is happening in an incremental manner and it's a slow process because it involves changes in gender norms and gender relations, nonetheless, it is a wonderful beginning!!