



# JEEVIKA NEWSLETTER

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## Empowering Democracy : The Impact of JEEVIKA Didis on Voter Participation through SVEEP

In the heart of Bihar, a grassroots movement led by JEEVIKA Didis is reshaping the landscape of democratic engagement. These dedicated women are not only agents of change but catalysts for a more robust and inclusive democracy. As we delve into the data and stories behind their efforts, we uncover a narrative of empowerment, education and civic responsibility.

The impact of JEEVIKA Didis on voter participation goes beyond numbers; it embodies a profound commitment to strengthening democratic values and empowering marginalized communities. Let us explore how their initiatives are driving tangible outcomes and fostering a culture of active citizenship across Bihar.

### The Context: Bihar's Democratic Challenges

Bihar, like many regions in India, has historically grappled with low voter turnout and challenges related to political participation. Despite significant strides in recent years, there remains a need to foster greater awareness



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and enthusiasm for the electoral process, particularly among marginalized communities. Additionally, Bihar has a significant population of individuals who have migrated to other states or countries for employment opportunities. Engaging with this high-emigrated population presents a unique challenge in ensuring their continued participation and representation in the democratic process. The efforts of Jeevika Didis under the SVEEP initiative aim to bridge these gaps and create inclusive avenues for civic engagement, both within Bihar and among its diaspora. Through



innovative outreach strategies and targeted communication, Jeevika Didis strive to empower all segments of the Bihar populace to exercise their voting rights and contribute to the democratic fabric of the state.

### Mobilizing Communities: The SVEEP Initiative

At the heart of the JEEVIKA Didis' mission lies the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, a nationwide campaign dedicated to voter education and increasing voter turnout, particularly in areas with historically low participation rates.

Recent reports from the Election Commission of India reveal a positive trend in Bihar's voter turnout, with a gradual increase observed across different phases of elections. In the first and second phases, voter turnout stood at 47%, rising to 59% in the third phase. While these figures signify progress, there are still significant pockets within Bihar where participation levels fall short of the desired benchmarks.

### Strategies for Impact: A Multi-faceted Approach

This is precisely where the JEEVIKA Didis have emerged as transformative agents within their communities. Armed with knowledge, passion, and a commitment to civic duty, these women have taken on the challenge of mobilizing voters and raising awareness about the importance of political participation.

The success of the SVEEP initiative spearheaded by JEEVIKA Didis can be attributed to a multifaceted approach that combines grassroots outreach, educational programs, and community engagement activities.

- **Door-to-Door Campaigns:** JEEVIKA Didis actively engage in door-to-door campaigns, visiting households to educate residents about voter rights, registration processes, and the significance of exercising their franchise. These personalized interactions serve to demystify the electoral process and instill a sense of civic responsibility among community members.
- **Community Events and Workshops:** Organizing community events and workshops forms a cornerstone of the SVEEP initiative. By hosting gatherings focused on voter education, JEEVIKA Didis create platforms for dialogue, debate, and shared learning. These events foster a culture of informed citizenship and empower individuals to make informed decisions at the ballot box.
- **Collaboration with Local Institutions:** Collaboration with local institutions, such as schools, community centres, and self-help groups, amplifies the impact of the SVEEP initiative. JEEVIKA Didis leverage these partnerships to reach a wider audience and tailor their outreach efforts to specific demographics and communities.



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- **Creative Awareness Campaigns:** Innovative and creative awareness campaigns are instrumental in capturing the attention of diverse audiences. JEEVIKA Didis employ mehendi art, rangoli, oath taking and discussion on community forum to convey messages about the importance of voting in a compelling and relatable manner.
- **Social Media Campaign:** The activities conducted by JEEVIKA Didis as part of the SVEEP initiative are documented and shared on various social media platforms. Through engaging posts, videos and info graphics, these efforts are showcased to a wider audience, including urban residents and young voters who may not be directly reached through traditional community outreach. By leveraging social media, JEEVIKA Didis amplify their impact, raise awareness about voter education, and encourage active participation in the democratic process among digital-savvy citizens. The campaign's online presence fosters dialogue, inspires action, and contributes to building a more informed and engaged electorate across Bihar and beyond.

### Measuring Success: The Impact of JEEVIKA Didis' Efforts

The impact of the SVEEP initiative led by JEEVIKA Didis is palpable and measurable. Through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, we have witnessed notable improvements in voter turnout and awareness levels in targeted regions.

**Increased Voter Turnout:** By focusing on areas with historically low participation rates, JEEVIKA Didis have contributed to a tangible increase in voter turnout. The recent uptick in voter participation during Bihar's elections is a testament to the efficacy of their efforts. At the heart of the JEEVIKA Didis' mission lies the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, a nationwide campaign dedicated to voter education and increasing voter turnout, particularly in areas with historically low participation rates.

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- **Enhanced Voter Awareness:** Community members are now more knowledgeable about their electoral rights and responsibilities, thanks to the initiatives spearheaded by JEEVIKA Didis. This heightened awareness translates into informed decision-making during elections.
- **Strengthened Community Cohesion:** The SVEEP initiative has not only empowered individuals but has also fostered a sense of collective agency within communities. Through collaborative action, residents are actively shaping the democratic landscape of Bihar.



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### Empowering Through Education

At the core of their efforts lies a commitment to education. The JEEVIKA Didis conduct door-to-door campaigns, organize rallies, and host community events to disseminate critical information about voting rights, registration procedures, and the significance of political participation. Data from independent surveys conducted in collaboration with local authorities indicate a noticeable uptick in voter awareness and knowledge about the electoral process in areas where the JEEVIKA Didis have been active. This shift is not merely statistical; it reflects a tangible change in mind set and civic engagement.



### Breaking Barriers: Women Leading the Way

One of the most compelling aspects of this movement is the role of women. Historically underrepresented in Bihar's political landscape, women are now emerging as influential stakeholders in the electoral process, thanks to the tireless efforts of the JEEVIKA Didis. Recent voter registration data highlights a significant increase in the number of women voters, particularly in regions targeted by the JEEVIKA initiative. This surge in female participation underscores the transformative impact of community-driven empowerment initiatives.

### Beyond Numbers: Stories of Impact

Behind every statistic lies a human story. Through qualitative interviews and narratives collected from the field, we encounter first-hand accounts of individuals whose perspectives on democracy have been reshaped by the JEEVIKA Didis' outreach. Take, for instance, the story of Sarita Devi, a resident of Piprahi, a remote block of Sheohar district. Prior to engaging with the JEEVIKA Didis, Sarita was unaware of her voting rights. Today, she not only casts her vote but actively encourages her neighbours to do the same, embodying the ripple effect of grassroots mobilization.

### Strengthening the Fabric of Democracy

As Bihar prepares for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the impact of the JEEVIKA Didis on voter participation cannot be overstated. Their work transcends the boundaries of politics, fostering a culture of civic responsibility and empowerment that is fundamental to a healthy democracy.

Looking ahead, the challenge lies in sustaining this momentum beyond election cycles. By institutionalizing voter education programs and leveraging community networks, the legacy of the JEEVIKA Didis can endure as a model for participatory governance.

### Conclusion: A Call to Action

In closing, the story of the JEEVIKA Didis is not just about elections; it is about the resilience of democracy itself. Their journey embodies the spirit of grassroots activism and the transformative potential of ordinary citizens working towards a common goal. As we celebrate their achievements, let us heed their call to action – to engage, educate, and empower every citizen to embrace their role in shaping the future of our nation. Together, we can build a stronger, more inclusive democracy, one vote at a time.



## Programs & Initiatives

### Training of the Young Professionals on “Community Based Organization Process and Quality”

In the domain of community development and grassroots empowerment, the concept of Self-Help Group (SHG) Federations holds significant promise and potential. These federations, comprising collective groups of individuals from marginalized or underserved communities, serve as vehicles for socio-economic empowerment and sustainable development. Recognizing the pivotal role that SHG Federations play in fostering inclusive growth and community resilience, JEEVIKA - Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society organized a comprehensive three-day training program from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at the S.D Vatika



Palace in Patna. The primary objective of this initiative was to enhance the understanding and capacity of participants in Community Based Organization (CBO) processes, with a specific focus on SHG Federations.

The training initiative commenced with a structured outline of the program, providing a roadmap for the days ahead and setting clear objectives for the attendees. Participants embarked on a journey of exploration and learning aimed at deepening their understanding of SHG Federations and their transformative potential.

The initial sessions of the training were designed to elucidate the fundamental needs and objectives of SHG Federations. Through interactive discussions and presentations, participants delved into the core principles underlying the SHG movement and examined various NGO initiatives and models that have catalysed its growth across India. Models such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), National Rural





## Transforming Lives

Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), DHAN Foundation, and MYRADA were explored, shedding light on successful strategies for community mobilization, financial inclusion, and livelihood enhancement.

A defining moment of introspection occurred during a thought-provoking group exercise, where participants collaboratively identified and analysed the limitations faced by SHGs in their respective contexts. This exercise not only fostered critical thinking but also underscored the importance of collective problem-solving and solidarity in overcoming socio-economic challenges at the grassroots level.

The program's progression continued with focused workshops on CBO structures, leadership rotation, and governance principles within SHG Federations. Participants gained practical insights into the intricate dynamics of forming and sustaining effective community-based organizations. Discussions on cadre management and leadership succession strategies equipped attendees with actionable tools to promote inclusivity and accountability within their respective organizations. A poignant highlight of the training was the screening of the inspiring film "Hath se Hath milao," which vividly portrayed the transformative impact of SHG federations in fostering economic empowerment and social cohesion. The film served as a powerful catalyst for meaningful discussions on the importance of collective action and mutual support in driving sustainable change within communities.

As the training progressed into its final day, discussions shifted towards exploring good governance principles and cooperative ethos essential for the success of SHG Federations. Participants engaged in reflective dialogues on the values of transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making, which are fundamental to building resilient and inclusive community institutions. The culminating moments of the training were characterized by a shared sense of purpose and commitment among participants. Armed with newfound knowledge and insights, attendees departed with a renewed sense of agency and determination to drive positive change within their communities.

In retrospect, the training program organized by JEEVIKA was not merely a series of workshops; it was a transformative journey of empowerment and enlightenment. By equipping participants with practical skills and fostering networks of collaboration, JEEVIKA continues to play a pivotal role in advancing the SHG movement and promoting sustainable development across Bihar.

Looking ahead, the impact of this training initiative is poised to reverberate within communities, as participants apply their learnings to strengthen SHG Federations and amplify the voices of the marginalized. Through collective efforts and shared commitments, we can unlock the full potential of SHG Federations as catalysts for inclusive growth and community resilience. As we reflect on this enriching experience, we celebrate the spirit of collaboration and dedication that defines the SHG movement. By nurturing strong community-based organizations and fostering participatory development processes, we are paving the way towards a more equitable and empowered society.

In conclusion, the journey towards empowering communities through SHG Federations is an on-going endeavour, one that requires sustained commitment and collective action. Through continued capacity-building initiatives and strategic partnerships, we can harness the power of grassroots movements to create lasting impact and pave the path towards a more inclusive and prosperous future.



**Transforming Lives****Seeds of Change : How Priyanka Devi Cultivated a Thriving Livelihoods**

In the heart of Ghewdahi village, nestled within Madhubani district, Priyanka Devi's story exemplifies the transformative power of determination and initiative in the face of adversity. Living with her husband Minto Gond and their two young children, Priyanka's journey from financial constraints to entrepreneurial success is truly remarkable.

Priyanka's husband, a metric pass, worked locally in the village while Priyanka herself joined a Self-Help Group (SHG) under the JEEVIKA project in 2018. With a loan of Rs. 20,000 obtained through the SHG, Priyanka took a bold step forward by opening a small shop. In addition to managing the shop, she also engaged in agricultural activities, demonstrating her multifaceted skills and determination to improve her family's livelihood.

Regular SHG meetings became pivotal opportunities for Priyanka to expand her knowledge and skills. Through Village Resource Persons (VRPs), she learned about organic farming techniques, including setting up a nursery and producing vermicomposting. Eager to implement these techniques, Priyanka shared her newfound knowledge with her husband, initiating experiments in their fields using neem leaves, cow urine, and chickpea flour to create natural pesticides and fertilizers. This innovative approach led to the establishment of a profitable nursery, generating monthly earnings of Rs. 10,000 - 12,000.

Buoyed by her initial success, Priyanka took further strides towards agricultural entrepreneurship. She invested in four kattha (approximately half an acre) of land and commenced organic vegetable cultivation. Leveraging the proximity to the local market in Chauk Bazaar, Priyanka now sells vegetables daily, earning an additional income of Rs. 1,000 - 1,500 per day. The impact of Priyanka's newfound prosperity extends beyond financial gains. With her children now attending school regularly, Priyanka's efforts have translated into improved educational opportunities for her family, marking a significant milestone in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Priyanka's success story is a testament to the transformative impact of the JEEVIKA project and her indomitable spirit. From a struggling homemaker to a thriving entrepreneur, Priyanka's journey inspires hope and resilience, demonstrating the profound impact of economic empowerment on individual lives and community development. As Priyanka continues to flourish, she remains grateful for the support and opportunities provided by the JEEVIKA project. Her story serves as a beacon of hope for others facing similar challenges, showcasing the transformative potential of grassroots initiatives in fostering sustainable livelihoods and empowering communities.

Priyanka Devi's journey epitomizes the adage that determination and initiative can overcome any obstacle. With her unwavering resolve and entrepreneurial spirit, Priyanka has not only transformed her own life but has also become a role model for others aspiring to break free from the shackles of poverty and carve a path towards prosperity.





## JUNE

Calendar of Events

### COMING UP IN THE NEXT EDITION

- Introducing LokOS: Empowering Rural Communities through Efficient CBO Management and Monitoring
- Training of the Young Professionals on CBO Processes and Quality Management.



### Overcoming Challenges with Determination: Asha Tudu's Journey to Empowerment

In the rural village of Dhamna, nestled within Jamui district, many women like Asha Tudu once faced significant socio-economic challenges that hindered their ability to thrive. Limited access to financial resources, coupled with societal constraints, posed formidable barriers to women's empowerment and economic independence. However, amidst these challenges, Asha Tudu emerged as a beacon of hope, demonstrating remarkable resilience and determination in her pursuit of change.

The plight of women in Dhamna was characterized by limited economic opportunities and a lack of agency in decision-making processes. Asha Tudu, like many others, initially struggled to overcome communication barriers and navigate the intricacies of community development initiatives. Moreover, personal challenges, such as infertility after ten years of marriage, added to Asha's burden, creating additional hurdles on her path to empowerment.

Despite these obstacles, Asha Tudu's journey took a transformative turn when she associated with JEEVIKA in 2016. This initiative aimed to empower women through self-help groups (SHGs) and foster inclusive development at the grassroots level. Asha's involvement as a JEEVIKA Mitra marked the beginning of a remarkable journey towards empowerment and community leadership.

The impact of Asha's engagement with JEEVIKA transcended personal aspirations, resonating deeply within the fabric of her community. By assuming the role of a JEEVIKA Mitra and overseeing the operations of 13 self-help groups, Asha became instrumental in promoting financial inclusion and fostering collective empowerment

among women in Dhamna. Through her efforts, Asha facilitated regular group meetings and ensured meticulous financial management, setting exemplary standards for accountability and transparency. Her dedication and commitment not only enhanced the operational efficiency of SHGs but also instilled a sense of solidarity and purpose among group members.

Moreover, Asha's journey epitomized the transformative impact of JEEVIKA on women's empowerment. Over time, Asha's proficiency in Hindi improved significantly, enabling her to communicate effectively and even provide subtitling services for the benefit of Santali-speaking individuals in her community.

Asha Tudu's journey is a testament to the resilience and determination of women in rural Bihar. Despite facing personal and societal challenges, Asha embraced her role as a community leader with unwavering resolve, driving positive change and inspiring others to follow suit.