



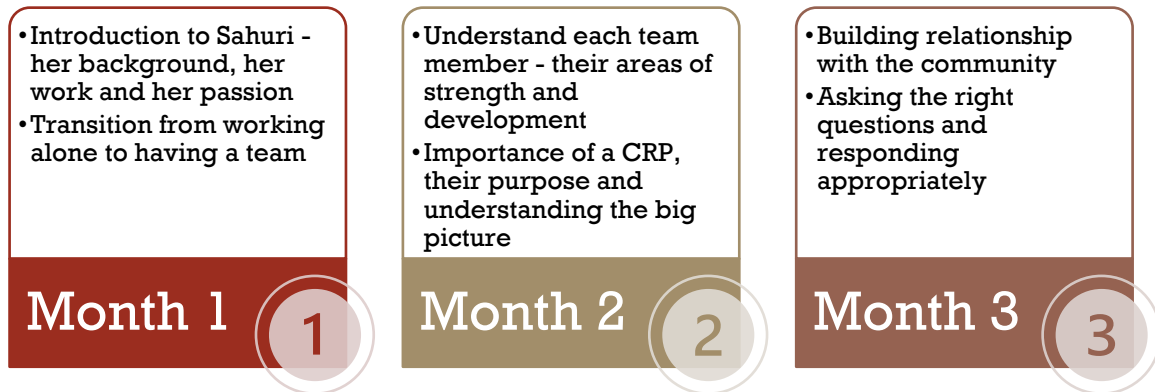
People's Action for National Integration - PANI

Sahuri Letters — Set 1

Field Coordinator Capacity Building Program
Program Swera
January '2021

Sahuri Letters – Set 1

Broad Guidelines to implement these letters:



1) Preparation:

- Attend the briefing session conducted by Phicus. After the session, facilitators will practice reading the letters aloud a few times to understand the context and the flow. Anticipate any questions that may come from the Field Coordinators and prepare for the same
- Increase your understanding about the topic, to enable you to answer any questions that come your way
- Coordinate with the Block Coordinator to fix up a time when all the Field Coordinators are available. You will need 1 hour for this session

2) Implementation:

- Get all the Field Coordinators to sit in a circle and create a friendly environment
- Tell them that you have received a letter that is addressed to them. This letter is from Sahuri and you have been requested to read out this letter
- Ask them to make a note of any questions that is coming to their mind. Let them allow you to read the whole letter before asking questions
- Read the letter out loudly with the correct tone, pause and emotions
- Once you have read the letter, ask the team if they understood the letter or want you to read it again. Read it again if required

3) Discussion:

- After every letter, you will find a set of questions to ask the team. Ask those questions and get the group to discuss their thoughts
- Create a safe and open space to have these conversations. Encourage them to share their points
- Capture some key points shared by the group in the feedback form and share it with the core team/ design team at PANI/ Phicus
- Remember that the letter is only a tool to help you have a rich conversation about the topic. Talk more about the topic in the letter, rather than Sahuri or her story

Letter 1 – Getting to know Sahuri

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

My name is Sahuri. Do you know what Sahuri means? It means the sun! My mother named us siblings after the sky and stars – my sisters are Chandra and Tara, and my brother is Akash!

I want to talk to you all. Even though I have never met you, I am very much like you. I live in the neighbouring village with my husband, children, and mother-in-law. I am from a family of farmers. My father is a farmer, my husband is a farmer, I am also a farmer. When I tell people that I am a farmer, sometimes they laugh. But I always say, I work in the field as much as my husband, so why should I not be a farmer as well? Am I not right?

Apart from my work on the field, I cook, clean, and manage the house and our 2 cows! I was born in the next district, and my mother always complains that I took 10 hours to be born, that too on the hottest day of summer! Maybe that is why she named me Sahuri, after the sun!

(pause)

When I was a child, I used to love going to school, playing with my friends, and fighting with my younger brother! My two older sisters would help our mother with the housework, but every time she called me to help, my brother and I would run away!

My father used to support me when I did not want to help because I was his youngest daughter, and I was his favourite. He encouraged me to study as I was fascinated by books. I loved to read and do maths. Much against my mother's wishes, my baba (father) ensured that I studied till 10th Std. He was so happy when I passed, he distributed sweets to the entire village!

(pause)

My *tauji* wanted me to get married immediately, but my *baba* said I would go to college. I was really surprised to hear this, but I was also incredibly happy. I was going to be the first girl in my family to go to college. My two sisters were already married. My happiness did not last too long. My *baba* died when I was in my second year of college and my mother got me married. I was incredibly sad; I cried a lot, but no one listened to me. I got married and moved about 200 kms from my village. My heart broke when I had to leave my brother and *ma* and move to my husband's village.

(pause)

My husband, Mukesh, works in town – sometimes in construction, sometimes loading trucks, and in any other day job that he gets. During the crop season, he comes back to the village and helps me with the harvest. He is a nice man and takes care of me and our children. We have two children – Anita and Deepu, and both go to school. My mother-in-law stays with us, and she helps me take care of the children.

(pause)

Like I told you earlier, I am a farmer. After I got married, my husband had to go to the town for work, I took over the entire responsibility of farming in our fields. Little by little, I learnt about different seeds, different techniques, ways to save water and ways to

increase the yield in my field. Seeing my interest in trying new techniques for farming, an NGO working in our village selected me as a CRP. I learnt a lot of new things which I implemented in my field and shared this knowledge with other farmers as well. Many farmers started coming to me, asking for advice and help. I was happy that I could help them in my own small way.

(pause)

While I was a CRP, Jagriti Didi, one of the *Cluster coordinator*, taught me a lot of things. She used to take me with her for farmer meetings, to her office and I was inspired by her. I wanted to be like her. When I told her this, she laughed and said, 'You can be better than me, *paagli*'. She convinced me to complete my Diploma through long distance. When I was pregnant for Anita, I studied hard and gave my exams. When I think back, I do not know how I did so many things, but I am so happy that I fulfilled my father's dream.

(pause)

Today, I am a *Cluster coordinator*. Like most of you, I also go into different villages and help farmers learn new techniques and adopt them in their fields. In every village I have one or two CRPs working closely with me. They help farmers in their village adopt new techniques. I really enjoy it when farmers come to me and say, '*because of you my yield has almost doubled.*' I wish *baba* were here to see this. He would have been incredibly happy and proud.

(pause)

You must be wondering why I am writing to you. I have seen many ups and downs in my life. I have made some mistakes and been in some difficult situations that have taught me a lot. I want to share these with you – my life stories and experiences. I also want to hear your experiences as we go along. I hope you will read my letters and be my friend.

Will you be my friend?

(pause)

I have to go cook now. I will write again soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 1

Since this is an introduction letter, get the group to share their thoughts around the following:

1) What did you think of Sahuri and her story? Were you able to relate to her?

2) Would you like to be her friend?

3) Would you like to receive more letters from her?

Letter 2 – Transitioning to a Team Leader

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. Do you remember me? I wrote to you a few weeks ago. How are you all doing?

(pause. Wait for response)

It has been a very exiting week for me as it is the end of the Rabi season and I see beautiful healthy Rabi crops standing in the field. Usually at this time, I have a few new CRPs join work. This period comes with lots of new challenges as well as satisfaction of seeing more of my sisters do the job that I love so much. It reminds me of the time when I joined as a CRP and Jagriti Didi was always by my side, guiding me and helping me.

(pause)

Last Tuesday, I got a call when I was in the Block Office. It was Meera, my new CRP who had joined about a month ago. When I picked up the phone, I could hear her cry. I tried hard to ask her what was wrong, but I just couldn't understand anything. I told her to wait and I immediately got on my bike and went to her village. Luckily for me, her village was only 20 mins away. I got to her village and called her. By then she had calmed down. She asked me to come to her field as she did not want to see anyone else in the village. I got worried and rushed towards her field to see her.

(pause)

Meera was sitting under a tree and lost deep in thought. Her eyes were red, and it looked like she had cried a lot. I sat down next to her and asked her what happened. She said, *'Didi, I cannot do this work. I do not want to be a CRP; I was better off at home and helping my family in farming. I do not want to help the village. You find someone else. I don't want to do this job.'* She started to cry again. After lots of cajoling and consoling she told me that all the farmers she approached and spoke to over the last 2 days, had either laughed at her or shouted at her and asked her to leave. They had also told her that she was supposed to be at home like a decent girl and not going around talking to farmers.

(pause)

I smiled to myself when I heard this. How many times I felt the same way when I started as a CRP and thought I just could not do this job. How many CRPs I have met over the last 5 years, who have said they wanted to quit? I explained to Meera that it is something that a lot of us go through, including me, when I started my journey. Just because a few people said that I should sit at home, should I really sit at home? Should I not prove them wrong by working harder and ensuring that I make a difference to the lives of the farmers in the village. Yes, there will be a few people who say that, but there will also be equal number of farmers who will appreciate and understand what she was trying to do. After a lot of conversation, Meera finally agreed. She had a new positive energy in her now where she was determined to stand on her own feet, be independent and prove all these farmers wrong. I was energised by seeing her energy. I was also secretly glad that I was able to change her mind and make her realise that these challenges will keep coming, she needs to be strong enough to fight it.

(pause)

I was reminded of what *Jagriti Didi* used to tell me when I became a *Cluster coordinator*. She used to say, '*Sahuri, I know you are a really good CRP, but your true test is to get things done through other people. You will only be able to succeed when they succeed, if they fail, you fail. You are only as good as your team.*' At that time, it did not make a lot of sense to me. I had been a good CRP and won a lot of awards from my organization for my performance. I thought it is going to be easy to get other CRPs to do this job. But I was wrong! And I learnt it the hard way.

(pause)

The first few months of me being a *Cluster coordinator*, I would go to different villages to meet my CRPs. If anyone told me they cannot do something, I would do it for them! If they were scared to do a farmer meeting, I would tell them to plan it when I visit, so I could do it. If anyone could not fill up the report or do the baseline survey, I would do it for them. I was initially happy that the work was getting done. Soon I realised that I was getting overloaded with work. Suddenly all my CRPs wanted my time as they had so much pending work. They could not do so many things without my help. I had made all of them dependant on me. I did not spend time teaching them how to do these things. It was a complete mess. I really did not know how to get out of this situation!

(pause)

I went running to my *guru, Jagriti Didi*. She patiently listened to me and smiled. '*Remember I told you, you are as good as your team. Do you realise why I said that?*' she said. '*One mantra that I follow with my team, and I did it with you also when you were a CRP, is to let the CRP do the job on their own, even if they are terrible at it. Let them do it and learn on their own. You must be by their side, tell them how to do it, encourage them when they do it well, tell them what they did not do well and how to do it better. Let them fail, let them learn by doing it multiple times. That is of more valuable than you do it for them. You have to LET GO. Your job is to support them through this process!*'

(pause)

That lesson that *Jagriti Didi* gave me was so valuable. I followed her mantra religiously. When I went to meet the CRP, and they asked me to do something, I told them to do it first while I watched. Initially they were shocked, but I was firm. I asked them to do it and I only supported them. It took a lot of time; it also took a lot of patience from me. Many times, I was tempted to say, '*I will do it*', but I stopped myself. I let them make mistakes, let them learn from their mistakes. Today, we are in a much better place. My team can manage almost any situation on their own. They do not need my help for daily activities. Like *didid* said, '*you are only as good as your team*'. Now I focus on new CRPs like *Meera*. I want to ensure they get to the level of other CRPs very soon.

So, my dear friends, what do you do to help your CRPs? I would love to hear from you.

I have to call *Jagriti Didi* now. I will write again soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 2

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of managing her team from her letter?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened

- 3) How did you manage to transition from working alone to working with a team?

- 4) What do you do to ensure your team is supported and can work more independently?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) As Field Coordinators, you need to transition from doing the work yourself to getting the work done by others/ CRPs
- 2) Help and support the CRPs, let them learn by doing, let them learn by making mistakes
- 3) Be supportive and help them by giving guidance and feedback
- 4) Put yourself in their position. Imagine how they must be feeling before you respond

Letter 3 – Understanding each team member

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Did you enjoy reading my last letter?

(pause. Wait for response)

I am incredibly happy to inform you that Meera is doing fine. She has pulled herself together and immersed herself into work completely. She has been able to get a few farmers on her side, including the *Pradan*. I visited her village yesterday and was excited to see the positive change in her and her work.

(pause)

Today I want to tell you about another CRP in my team, Durga. She is completely opposite to Meera, in terms of her work as well as her attitude. Durga joined our organization in the last *Kharif* season. She was in the same place as Meera when she joined. She was unsure of how to approach the farmers, how to explain about the *machaan* success story or conduct group meetings. After one season, she is a lot more confident. Durga has created a good name for herself in the village now. The farmers are reaching out to her to get her advice on various methods. When I hear this, I feel so proud.

(pause)

I also have another CRP, Shanta who got married and has come into this village. Before she got married, she was a CRP in her village and has done this job before. During the training or when I am trying to explain something to her, she already is aware of that concept. Shanta sometimes tells me how they would do it in their village, which is in another State. Isn't it wonderful that the work we do is also been done in different states? We are all contributing towards helping and growing the farmers nationwide! What a great feeling that is!

(pause)

Sometimes I feel so overwhelmed! I have 10 CRPs and they are all so different. How do I manage all of them? How can I ensure they learn and grow quickly? Last month we had *Naveen bhaiya* from the Head Office, visit our block. He spent time with all the *Cluster coordinator* and shared his own experiences of managing his work when he was on the field. At that time, I wanted to ask him how he managed his team of different people. Somehow, I mustered up courage and I asked him this. I was hoping he would not get upset with my question.

(pause)

Naveen bhaiya smiled and said, 'What a wonderful question! Let me tell you what I do, and it has been extremely useful for me. My supervisor told me this when I was in my first job and it has been the best advice I have received.' I was excited and was already thinking of implementing his advice and manage my team better. All of us took out our notebook to make a note of what he was about to say.

(pause)



Naveen bhaiya said, 'We all have many people in our teams. People are different, their learning curve is different, their capabilities are different, their personalities are different. Exactly like our fingers, all our 5 fingers are different, but they serve a purpose. You cannot say one finger is better than the other. Similarly, our team members are also different, and they need to be treated differently if you want the best outcome. If you treat everyone the same way, it will not work. Then you will be like that hammer. Whatever you see, you will think it is a nail and just keep banging it.'

(pause)

We all looked a bit confused. He smiled again and said, 'Let me give you an example. I have 4 different people in my team in the Head Office. One person is new, he is still learning about the job and his role. I spend a lot of time with him to explain what needs to be done. I give him 'direction' on what to do and sometimes how to do it. Once he picks up his job, I can reduce the time I spend with him. The second person has already spent 6 months in the company. She now understands her role, day to day tasks and activities. I only 'support' her when she gets stuck or if there is something new that she needs to do. I spend lesser time with her, but I support her in whatever she gets stuck or has to do something new.'

(pause)

'The third person has already spent more than a year in my team. He comes to me when he has a problem, or something is complicated. He tells me what the problem is and asks me what he should do. Now, at this time, I ask him, what he things he should be doing. Most of the time, he can come up with a solution on his own. Sometimes I give him a solution and he goes away to implement it. Here, I help him 'solve his own problems'. You can see that I do not spend too much time with him, based on the need he comes to me. The fourth person has been with me for more than 1.5 years. She has become an expert now. In fact, when someone new joins my team, I ask her help for field visits or to explain about our work. She really helps me in managing my team. These are four different people, and they are at four different stages of their job. I have to treat them differently. If I treat everyone the same way, they will get frustrated and they will not be able to grow as well'.

(pause)

After the meeting I thought about it for a long time when I was cooking for my family. It was a simple *mantra* that *Naveen Bhaiya* had explained.

1. If someone is new and still learning about the role – give them direction
2. If someone has spent time and learnt about the job – give them support
3. If someone has spent lot of time and does their job well – help them solve their own problems
4. If someone has become an expert in their job – give them newer challenges/ tasks to do

I am extremely excited about this new *mantra*. I am going to try it with my team and see how it works.

So, my dear friends, did you like this new *mantra* shared by *Naveen Bhaiya*?

I will sign off now. I have to prepare for my meeting tomorrow. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend, Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 3

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of managing her team from this letter?
- 2) What do you think of *Naveen Bhaiya's mantra* of different styles for different team members? Is this something you can relate to? If yes, share examples
- 3) What are a few other things you can do to help your team members?
 - a. Who are new (like Meera)?
 - b. Who are about 6 months old in the organization (like Durga)?
 - c. Who are older than 1 year?
 - d. Who are experts?
- 4) What can you implement in your team based on this mantra?
- 5) What are your key takeaways from this letter?

Ensure you leave the group with the following messages:

- 1) Different team members are different, and they need to be treated differently
- 2) It is important to understand and assess where each team member is
- 3) The 4 different styles to work with your team based on their capability and tenure are:
 - a. Directing – spend more time with them explaining their job/ helping them on the field
 - b. Supporting – let them do their tasks. Observe, share feedback, and support them
 - c. Problem solving – get them to think and come up with solutions
 - d. Newer challenges – give them new challenges and tasks. Get them to help you with new joiners in the team

Letter 4 – CRP Role and Purpose

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I was very happy to get all your responses for my letters. Thank you for all your love and support. I really enjoy writing to you. I am waiting for your letters, please write to me about your experiences and thoughts.

Did you think about what I told you last time? Were you able to use it in your team?

(pause. Wait for response)

I am writing to you to share something wonderful that happened two days ago. It was a Sunday afternoon; Mukesh, Anita and Deepu were at home and we were all watching TV. You remember my husband and children, don't you? While Deepu was changing channels, he came upon a program that was talking about farmers and their growth in Assam. *'Ma, this is something like what you do, let us watch it'*, he said with a lot of excitement. Mukesh and I looked at each other and said, *'Yes, let us watch it and see what it is about'*. Anita was not happy, she wanted to watch a movie, but she gave in seeing Deepu's excitement.

(pause)

The program started with interviews of a few farmers in Assam. The farmers, one by one, spoke about how difficult their life had been a few years ago, how they spent a lot of money on seeds and fertilisers but the yield they got was not good enough. They could barely make two ends meet. I could understand their situation. All my growing up years, I have seen my father, grandfather and so many other farmers suffer due to the same problem.

(pause)

The farmers then started to speak about a program called *'Krishi Sakhi'* that was implemented by Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission along with an NGO. They identified a set of women from every village called *Krishi Sakhi* and trained them to provide technical support to rural farmers. These *Krishi Sakhi's* got training from various partners and became experts in their villages. Over a period of time, these *Krishi Sakhi's* started charging for their services and the farmers were happy to pay as they saw value. The whole program was created to make farmers in villages self-reliant and provide opportunities for women to develop themselves and be independent.

(pause)

Mukesh said that this was such a great program and Assam government had done a good job in implementing it. He also said, our Government should do the same in our state so farmers could benefit. I agreed with him at that time and I thought it will be so helpful for our farmers to improve their yield and income.

(pause)

The next day, I went to my block office and met our Block Leader, Ali. With great excitement I told him about the program I watched and how it had helped all the farmers. I asked him why we cannot do something like this in our State? He said, *'What a great*



question you have asked! Get everyone together, I think this is especially important for us to talk about right now.' I asked all my other Cluster coordinator to come together for a discussion. We all settled down for a discussion with *Ali bhaiya*, our Block Leader

(pause)

Ali bhaiya said 'I want to talk to you about the CRPs we have and their purpose in our program. While we may have spoken about this in the beginning of the program, it is important for us to refresh ourselves every now and then. How important is the CRP in our program?' We all said, 'Very important'. Ali bhaiya said, 'CRPs are the most important and critical part of our program. If they succeed, then our program succeeds; if they don't then we fail. This whole program has been designed keeping the CRP at the centre. Everything we do, is to make sure it helps the CRP in some way. By the end of the 5th year, we want the CRPs to become 'agri-preneurs'. They should be able to support their village and neighbouring villages for all agriculture and water related issues, independently. She should be able to charge the farmers a small fee as well. This is how we can make our farmers and villages self-reliant. We are also helping our CRPs create a stream of revenue and not depend on us for ever.'

(pause)

Ali bhaiya continued and said, "The single most important person who will make this happen for our organization and the CRPs, is YOU. You are the closest to the CRPs, you see their day-to-day challenges, you engage with them closely – you inspire them and motivate them to continue this journey they have started on. You understand the kinds of challenges they are facing at home or in the village. You help them overcome these challenges. You have faced these challenges yourself; you have overcome them and today you are in the position to help a new generation of CRPs develop themselves and help farmers in their villages. The biggest success to your role would be, to train the CRPs and equip them so well, that they do not need you after 2 years.'

(pause)

I said, 'Exactly how Jagriti Didi helped me become independent and help farmers on my own.' The other Cluster coordinator also had examples of different people who had helped them get independent.

(pause)

All of us were really excited to hear this. Ali bhaiya continued and said, 'When you have been able to create this army of independent and self-reliant CRPs and farmers, it will help us take this model to the Government. Our dream is to work with the Government and scale this program in our entire state. Can you imagine what a great opportunity that would be? You would have played a significant role in creating history for this organization and state. We can then proudly say that our organization, along with the Government has made our farmers self-reliant. Exactly what you saw in the program yesterday in Assam. We could be the next State to be spoken about and aired on TV. We could be the reason for someone in another state to get inspired and adopt this model.'

(pause)

All of us started clapping. We felt happy that we are playing such a big role in this program. It is not just a job for us, we are going to create something big that will be implemented in the entire state, and who knows even in another state. We are all

determined to create mini versions of ourselves in our CRPs and make ourselves redundant in the next few years. I am so excited to see this dream come true.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, what can you do to make the CRPs successful? What can you do to make this model self-reliant? Write to me and let me know.

I will sign off now. I cannot wait to go home and tell my family that we may be the next program that gets featured on TV for creating an army of CRPs and self-reliant farmers and villages.

I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 4

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of watching a program on TV from this letter?

- 2) What do you think of the CRP's purpose and role in this program? What kinds of challenges does she have to face while working as a CRP?

- 3) How can you, as a Field Coordinator help the CRPs be successful in their job?

- 4) What else can YOU do to help the CRPs transition to an agri-preneur?

- 5) What will you start doing differently from today to help the CRPs?

Ensure you leave the group with the following messages:

- 1) The big picture of the program and the vision to work with the government/ implement it across the state
- 2) The role and purpose of the CRP. Their success is key to the success of our program
- 3) Transition from a CRP to an agri-preneur over the next 4 years
- 4) Their role as Field Coordinators in realising this vision

Letter 5 – Engaging with the Community

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Do you enjoy receiving letters from me? Do you think I have been able to share some of my learnings with you through these letters?

(pause. Wait for response)

You remember my CRP, Durga? She is the one who joined last season and has learnt the tasks quickly. I support her as and when needed but she can do most of the activities on her own. She is a very smart and bright girl with a lot of potential. I think she will be an excellent agri-preneur in 4-5 years as she has some great qualities.

(pause)

Last week, I set out to visit Durga's village as per my schedule. When I reached the village, I could see a crowd gathered near the panchayat office. I could see *Vishnu ji*, the Pradhan standing with a few people. I could see Durga sitting on the ground along with her register and daily diary. I reached the crowd and said, *'Namaste Vishnu ji, what happened? Is everything ok?'* Vishnu ji said, *'What ok. Nothing is ok. Your organization is teaching all nonsense to these young girls about farming. They are in turn ruining our farms and farmers income. I want you to stop all these things right now. Durga will not work with you anymore. She is a young girl and should stay at home, not roaming around in the village like this. You please stop all this training for her.'*

(pause)

I must admit, I was a little scared initially. I said, *'Vishnu ji, let us sit down and talk about this.'* Vishnu ji said, *'There is nothing to talk. All of us have discussed and finalised, stop these activities right now.'* I looked around the group and identified 5 or 6 farmers that I had met in my previous visits. I said, *'Ok. Let us have a conversation about this. If we are not able to resolve this problem, I will talk to my Head Office and find the best solution. For that you have to tell me what happened.'* I looked at the crowd and asked one of them I recognised, *'Ghanshamji, you tell me what happened. Why is there a problem?'*

(pause)

Ghanshamji said, *'What is there to tell! This girl Durga is going around the whole village and telling farmers like me, who have been farming all our life, on how to sow seeds! What does this girl born yesterday know about farming? What if something goes wrong? Who will bear the cost? As it is, we are facing so much difficulties as farmers, we don't want to take any more risk.'* I said, *'I completely understand what Ghanshamji was saying. If I was a farmer and someone came and told me to try something, I may also be a bit sceptical.'* I told them I completely understand their concern and where they are coming from.

(pause)

I got all of them to sit down under the big banyan tree where they have their meetings. I said, *'Ghanshamji and Vishnu ji, you are not the first ones to feel like this. It is valid to have these concerns and it shows me how much these crops mean to you and your family. I also want to tell you that Durga is a CRP in our NGO. We are an organization that helps famers across this District to help understand and adopt new farming practices. We have lot of*



experts in our company who have studied agriculture and are farmers themselves. They have trained us. They have trained CRPs like Durga. Whatever Durga is telling you is tried and tested. All these techniques have proved useful to many other farmers and help them almost double their yield and income. We have been able to help farmers change their quality and quantity of crops over a period of time.'

(pause)

I looked around and asked some of the other farmers, 'Ram ji, Kishan ji, in the Kharif season, Durga shared some new ways of paddy farming with you and you adopted it. Did you face any loss/ problems or did your yield increase?' They both shook their head and said it increased. I said, 'we work in many blocks and villages in this district and I can say almost all farmers have benefited from our work with them. Our goal is to help farmers increase their yield and CRPs like Durga play a big role in ensuring that the right messages reach the right farmers at the right time. In fact, you all should be proud of Durga, the daughter of this village who is helping all of you learn new ways of farming.'

(pause)

The farmers then said, 'What if something goes wrong? Who will bear the cost of it?' I said, 'Let us use a small part of your farm and use the new method. You continue to use your traditional method on the rest of the farm. When we harvest, we will see if it has made any difference to you. If yes, you can adopt the new method, if not, you can go back to your old method. Is this feasible to you.' I could see that the farmers were nodding their head. I added, 'Durga has been certified by our company to do this. She is fully qualified. I and my whole team are behind her so she can help you with any kind of challenges you have. You just have to give her and us one chance.'

(pause)

The farmers had a quick conversation with each other and a few of them volunteered to adopt the new method in their fields. I thanked them and told them that Durga will be in touch with them and get it implemented in their fields. I could see Durga watch this whole situation with a shocked expression. After we said our goodbyes to the farmers, Durga and I started walking towards her field. Durga said, 'Didi, how did you do this? They were just not ready to listen to me. They said all this was rubbish and I should not talk about it in the village. When I told them, I was trained and qualified, they got terribly angry with me. What did I do wrong Didi?'

(pause)

I smiled and told her, 'Before you do anything with the community Durga, you have to build a relationship with them. You must be a part of their group/ their community and it will be easier to convince them.' 'How do I do that Didi?' she asked. I said, 'You will learn this skill as you start interacting with the farmers, however, here are a few things I do, and it has helped me a lot. I learnt these when I was working on the field as a CRP. It really helped me. Firstly, use their name in conversations. Usually, people like to hear their name and when you remember it and use it in conversations, they feel happy and important that you remembered them.' Durga's eyes lit up and she said, 'Oh is that why you addressed all of them by name today so you could let them know that you remembered them?'. 'Yes Durga, I said. 'It always helps to know their name and a little bit about them. Where they stay, their family, what crop they are growing etc. Before you start talking to them about anything to do with farming, you should spend a few minutes asking about their whereabouts and maybe



about their family if you met them. This way, they will know that you care for them and their family.'

(pause)

Durga said, 'Understood Didi, what else can I do'. I said, 'The second thing that is important is to spend time listening to them. Ask them questions, ask them how they do a few things, get them to share their experiences. If they are not happy with something, like this situation, ask them why, what happened. Hear them out so you can address their concerns. If you don't take time to listen to them and only keep talking or sharing whatever you have, you will not be able to build a good relationship with them. That is why I asked them what the problem was and said I understand how they feel. Do you get it now Durga?'

(pause)

Durga said, 'Yes Didi, I think I understand. I should try and build a relationship with the farmers and community first. This will help me do my work better and they will accept me more.' I was happy to hear Durga understand the importance of building a relationship with farmers and community.

So, my dear friends, do you agree with me? Do you think it is important to build relationship with people? Write to me and let me know what you think.

I will sign off now. I have to call Vishnu ji to check if everything is fine. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 5

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of discussion with the community members?

- 2) Do you agree that building relationship with farmers/ community is important? If yes, how does it help?

- 3) What have you done in the past to build relationship with the farmers and CRPs?

- 4) What else are you going to try to build relationship with people around you?

Ensure you leave the group with the following messages:

- 1) Importance of building relationship with farmers and communities that you work with
- 2) Take time to get to know your farmers better – learn about them, their family, their field and the crops they grow, challenges they face etc.
- 3) Use their name, engage in conversations to know more about them
- 4) Listen to them, get them to share their concerns and how they are feeling
- 5) Acknowledge their feelings and respond to them (rather than react)

Letter 6 – Asking the right questions!

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I have been writing to you for 3 months now, time just flies. I would love to hear from you. Write to me and tell me about your experiences and ideas.

(pause. Wait for response)

Yesterday, I went to visit Shanta in her village. Our Head Office asked us to go to 10 villages in our block to do a door-to-door survey on how COVID-19 had impacted our farmers and their families. I thought it would be a good learning opportunity for Shanta and I could use her help to gather this information across the villages. We started this process with Shanta's village. I asked her to think about a few questions that we could ask the farmers. I was keen to know how this pandemic had impacted our farmers, so I set out early in the morning. When I reached Shanta's village, she was ready and waiting for me at the anganwadi. She smiled at me and said, '*Didi, I am ready to do the door-to-door survey. This is the first time I am doing something like this, I am a bit nervous.*' I told her not to worry as we both were going to be together and we could figure it out.

(pause)

We first went to the Anganwadi teacher's house. Shanta removed her diary and pen. After greeting the teacher and exchanging pleasantries, Shanta told her that we were gathering some information on how the pandemic had affected her. The anganwadi teacher said she would be happy to participate in the survey. Shanta started her questions:

Shanta: *Were you impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Teacher: *Yes, I was*

Shanta: *Was your family impacted by the pandemic?*

Teacher: *Yes, they were also impacted*

Shanta: *Did this pandemic impact your livelihood and household income?*

Teacher: *Yes, it really impacted us*

Shanta: *Did you get enough support by the Government in terms of food and ration?*

Teacher: *Yes, it was fine*

Shanta: *Did any other NGOs support you in this period?*

Teacher: *Yes, they supported us*

This went on for a few more minutes and Shanta thanked the teacher as we left her home. I looked at Shanta and asked her, '*Shanta, did you get all the information you needed?*' Shanta said, '*She answered all my questions Didi, but she must be very shy, she didn't speak much. She only said yes or no to my questions.*'

(pause)



I smiled at her and said, *'Why is that Shanta?'* *'I don't know, she must be shy or must have been busy'* she said. I said, *'Ok, let us go through your questions one more time. Let me ask you some of those questions – were you impacted by the pandemic? What would you say?'* Shanta said, *'I would say, 'yes, I was impacted.'* *'What about this question – Did you get enough support from the Government for food and ration?'* I asked. *'I would say, 'Yes' Didi'*, Shanta said. *'Did you see a pattern in the questions you asked? Did your questions lead her to answer in a certain way? Look at your diary, at her answers and tell me what you see,'* I said.

(pause)

Shanta stared at her diary for a long time and said, *'Didi, she has only said 'yes' or 'no' for all the questions!'* *'Exactly Shanta, you know why, because you asked her questions where her answers could only be 'yes' or 'no'. Did you get help, did the pandemic impact you, were you impacted – all these questions will allow the other person to answer in just 'yes' or 'no'. Even if the person wants to share more, they are not able to because the question is very pointed and asks for a very pointed one-word answer. Do you know what we call these types of questions? Closed ended questions. These types of questions only allow for short or one-word answers.'*

(pause)

Shanta said, *'Oh yes. I have seen it in movies, where the lawyers are saying 'answer only in yes or no; were you at the crime scene at the time of the crime!'* I said, *'Yes, absolutely. With these closed ended questions, you will not get enough answers. What you need to do is ask open ended questions. Questions which are broad, which allow for more conversations. When they share more information, it will help you understand their situation better. For ex: Instead of asking, 'were you impacted by the pandemic', I would ask, 'how did the pandemic impact you'. This will allow the person to think and share multiple scenarios or ways in which it impacted them. She may talk about the anganwadi being closed, children not getting mid-day meal etc. The objective of this survey is to get as much information. Did you understand Shanta?'*

(pause)

Shanta said, *'Yes Didi. I think I understand what you are saying. If we go to the doctor, he will ask 'what happened' so we can give him all the information and he can decide what medicine to give.'* *'Exactly Shanta, that is a good example of an open-ended question. Now how will you convert some of your questions to open ended questions?'* Shanta took out her book and started writing. After 10 minutes, she said, *'Didi, I think I have been able to change some questions. I can ask:*

- *How has the pandemic impacted you?*
- *How has the pandemic impacted your family?*
- *How did you manage your work/ livelihood during this time?*
- *What support did you get from the government and other NGOs?'*

'Very good Shanta. You have got it. Yes, these are great examples of asking open ended questions. Both types of questions are important. When you want people to share a lot more information, you ask open ended questions. When you want people to confirm your understanding about something, you ask closed ended questions. When you go to the field because the farmer has said there is a problem, you start with an open-ended question – what is the problem/ what happened to the crop. Based on what they say, you can confirm

your understanding by asking a closed ended question like, 'Is it because of the seed or water that the seeds did not germinate?' Here they will say 'yes or no'.

(pause)

Shanta's eyes lit up. *'Thank you so much Didi. I have learnt something new today. I am going to use it in my interaction with farmers and in my meetings. Now, I am going to practice this with the ASHA didi when we go to her house.'* With that we went to all the other houses in the village and Shanta asked great open-ended questions. We got a lot of information from this visit.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, do you agree with me? Do you think it is important to ask different types of questions at different situations? Have you used the open and closed ended questions? Write to me and let me know what you think.

I will sign off now. I have to compile all the information from the surveys. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 6

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of asking questions during the door-to-door survey?
- 2) What do you think is open ended questions? Give us some examples. What do you think is closed ended questions? Give us some examples
- 3) Where can you use these types of questions? How will it help you as Field Coordinators?
- 4) Where are you going to try using these questions?

Ensure you leave the group with the following messages:

- 1) Questioning is an art. The quality of answers depends on the quality of the questions
- 2) Open ended questions will help you get broad answers and get lot of information
- 3) Closed ended questions will help you confirm your understanding
- 4) You can ask questions in any situation – to CRPs, farmers, community, other field coordinators, block coordinators, district office and head office staff
- 5) Asking questions help you increase your understanding/ knowledge about a certain situation



Facilitated Session after Set 1 letters

- Core team is required to conduct a session of reflection before starting the Set 2 of Sahuri letters
- The objective of this session is to get the FCs to reflect on their learnings and write a letter to Sahuri.

Time	Session	Material
10 mins	<p>Check in</p> <p>Welcome the participants. Tell them that today you did not receive any letter from Sahuri. She has said that she wants to hear from you on how you are doing and what is going on with you. She has requested me to talk to you and get all the information.</p> <p>Check in on how they are coping in this stressful time. Check on their health, their family members health etc.</p>	
30 mins	<p>Reflections</p> <p>Recap the 6 letters written by Sahuri so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to Sahuri - her background, her work and her passion - Transition from working alone to having a team - Understand each team member - their areas of strength and development - Importance of a CRP, their purpose and understanding the big picture - Building relationship with the community - Asking the right questions and responding appropriately <p>Ask them the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What have you learnt from Sahuri? - What have you implemented so far? Share examples - What did you try to implement, and it did not work? <p>Get as many FCs as possible to share. During the conversation, remind them of key concepts (questioning, building relationships etc.)</p> <p>Summarise all the discussion.</p>	
20 mins	<p>Write a letter to Sahuri</p> <p>Tell them that Sahuri has requested for letters from you. She wants to hear and understand what you have learnt and implemented from her. Write a letter to her. Do not worry</p>	Note pad; pens



	<p>about it being perfect, just write from your heart. If you don't feel like writing, record a voice note for Sahuri.</p> <p>She specifically wants to know what you have implemented in your work and life. Please ensure you cover that.</p> <p>Optional: If you get time and if the group is comfortable, ask one or two of them to read out the letter to Sahuri.</p>	
10 mins	<p>Wrap up and close</p> <p>Tell them that you will share these letters with Sahuri and come back in next 10-15 days with another letter from Sahuri.</p> <p>Thank them and close the meeting</p>	



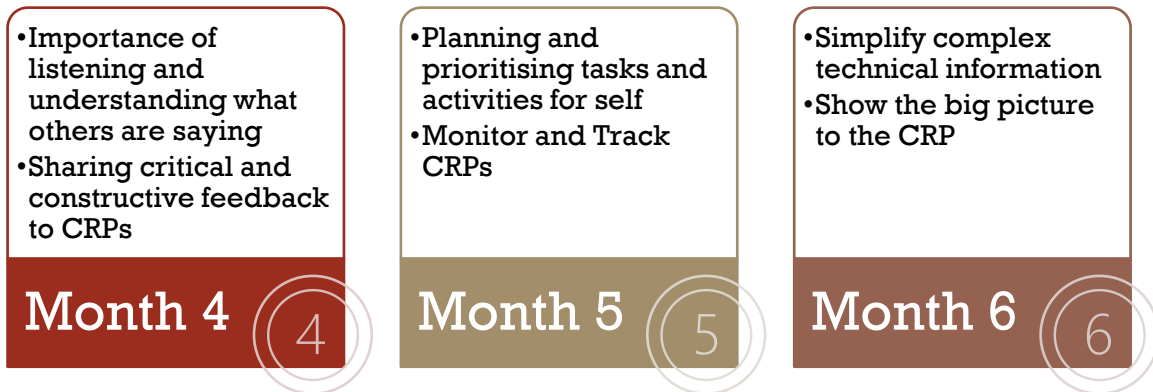
People's Action for National Integration - PANI

Sahuri Letters — Set 2

Field Coordinator Capacity Building Program
Program Swera
April '2021

Sahuri Letters – Set 2

Broad Guidelines to implement these letters:



1) Preparation:

- Attend the briefing session conducted by Phicus. After the session, facilitators will practice reading the letters aloud a few times to understand the context and the flow. Anticipate any questions that may come from the Field Coordinators and prepare for the same
- Increase your understanding about the topic, to enable you to answer any questions that come your way
- Coordinate with the Block Coordinator to fix up a time when all the Field Coordinators are available. You will need 1 hour for this session

2) Implementation:

- Get all the Field Coordinators to sit in a circle and create a friendly environment
- Tell them that you have received a letter that is addressed to them. This letter is from Sahuri and you have been requested to read out this letter
- Ask them to make a note of any questions that is coming to their mind. Let them allow you to read the whole letter before asking questions
- Read the letter out loudly with the correct tone, pause and emotions
- Once you have read the letter, ask the team if they understood the letter or want you to read it again. Read it again if required

3) Discussion:

- After every letter, you will find a set of questions to ask the team. Ask those questions and get the group to discuss their thoughts
- Create a safe and open space to have these conversations. Encourage them to share their points
- Capture some key points shared by the group in the feedback form and share it with the core team/ design team at PANI/ Phicus
- Remember that the letter is only a tool to help you have a rich conversation about the topic. Talk more about the topic in the letter, rather than Sahuri or her story!

In times of COVID-19, you may have to conduct Virtual Sahuri sessions.

- 1) Preparation before zoom call
 - a) Facilitator will need to record the audio file of Sahuri letter and save it in your mobile
 - b) Schedule the zoom call with the block team
 - c) Inform all the participants to select a silent place to connect which has good internet connectivity

- 2) Virtual session
 - a) Greet all the participants and build context for the letter reading session over Zoom call
 - b) Before sharing the audio file, inform the participants that, we have received the Sahuri letter, but due to the pandemic we are not able to share this letter with them in person. The audio recording of the letter will be shared on WhatsApp your reference. Next time when we meet in person, we will share that letter with all of you which is kept safe in the envelop.
 - c) Share the audio file with all the participants over a WhatsApp group and ask them to download. Ensure that everyone downloads the audio file.
 - d) During the session, give them a 15 min break so they can listen to the letter. After listening to the audio file, ask them to log back into the call
 - e) After 15 minutes, ensure all participants have logged back in. Facilitate the discussion by asking questions to everyone. Make sure everyone participates in the discussion.
 - f) While ending the call, share the feedback link with everyone and ask them to fill.

Letter 7 – Importance of Listening

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am so happy to get your letters and read them. Thank you for all your support and encouragement. I feel more energised by your energy and it has inspired me to keep writing to you. Please keep writing to me regularly, so I can also learn from you and your experiences as well.

(pause)

My dear friends, I have been writing to you for so long that I feel like you have become part of my family now. I am going to share something very personal and embarrassing with you today. While it is embarrassing, I learnt a lesson from it, and I thought I should share it with you.

(pause)

Last week, *Naveen Bhaiya* from the head office had come to our block and spent the whole day with us. He had come to prepare us for a funder visit that was due the next week. The funders were going to visit our block and they specifically wanted to meet with some of the Cluster Coordinators. They wanted one of us to take them on a field visit to meet some farmers and CRPs. They were clear that they did not want anyone from the Head office or District office on the visit. *Naveen Bhaiya* looked at me and said, '*Sahuri, you will be helping us with this funder visit. You will be with them the whole day, engage with them, take them on the field visit. You have seen us do it so many times before, you have to just follow that, nothing new. Also, there will be two people from the US and two people from Delhi. They will have a translator, don't worry*'. *Naveen Bhaiya* said it so casually that I almost thought he was joking.

(pause)

When I realised, he was not joking, my heart started beating extremely fast! I was not ready for this! How could I engage with 4 funders, that too from America? What will I say to them, what will they ask me? Thinking of all this I was feeling extremely nervous. I had one week to prepare for this day. I had to think of what to say, where to take them, whom to introduce them to. I was not sure if I would be up to it. *Naveen Bhaiya* saw my panic. Before he left, he told me, I was ready to do this, and he had full confidence in me.

(pause)

While I felt happy and honoured that *Naveen Bhaiya* had thought I was worthy to manage this visit, I was still really scared and nervous. I spent one week preparing for this visit. Spoke to everyone involved, prepared them on what to expect and what they can say to the funders, spoke to *Ali bhaiya* for his guidance. I created my talking points on what I would say. After dinner and putting my children to bed, I would practice it over and over again. After many sleepless nights and practicing my speech about the program and what we do, the day had finally arrived.

(pause)

I woke up early in the morning, got ready more carefully than I always do. I prayed to God and set out. As I was leaving, my children, Anita and Deepu wished me luck. They

had seen my struggle all through the week. I got to the Block office and waited patiently for the funders to arrive. After an hour of waiting, two Innovas pulled up outside the block office. I went forward to greet them. I could see *Naveen Bhaiya* in the backseat. I was so relieved and thought he will take over from me. As if he read my mind, he said, *'Don't get so happy Sahuri, I am not here to do the funder visit. I only came along to give you some moral support. I know you are going to do an exceptionally good job with this.'*

(pause)

I just decided to give it my best and move on with it. *Naveen bhaiya* introduced me to the four funders and said that I will help them with the visit. They smiled at me, they looked friendly, but I was still scared. We started our visit and I started telling them everything about the program and what we do, just like I had planned in my script. I took them to places, showed them our farms, got them to meet a few CRPs. I continued to talk and share everything I knew. I wanted them to see that I know a lot about farming, the crops, the farmers, and our program. They asked me some questions, but I did not pay too much attention to it as I had so much to share.

(pause)

After what felt like many hours of walking in the villages and talking, I was exhausted. When we reached the Block Office, *Naveen Bhaiya* asked the visitors if they had a good visit. They said that it was good and highly informative, however they had a lot of questions that were still unanswered. *Naveen Bhaiya* said he would answer all their questions on the ride back as they had a 3-hour journey.

(pause)

Everybody thanked me for my time and effort during the visit and left for the district office. *Naveen Bhaiya* said that I did well, and he would call me later to discuss this. I was so relieved that it was over. The stress and tension I was carrying on my shoulders, suddenly felt lifted. I went home and cooked some nice dinner for myself. Felt like I deserved it after so much effort. I was quite happy with myself and my performance. I did not forget anything, I stuck to my script and shared everything I wanted to.

(pause)

The next morning, *Naveen Bhaiya* called me. He said, *'Sahuri, how do you think yesterday went? Were you happy with your performance?'* I said, *'Yes Bhaiya. I had prepared a script about our program and what we do. I shared everything; I did not leave out any details. I spoke well and I spoke with confidence, just like you have taught us.'* *Naveen Bhaiya* said, *'Yes Sahuri, you did speak with confidence and it showed how much effort you had put into planning for the day. You had lot of details of the program packed in. I must say you did a good job on that. But I was not happy with yesterday. You could have done much better. In fact, I was a bit disappointed with you, I expected much better from you.'*

(pause)

My heart sank. I could not imagine what I had done wrong. I said, *'What did I do wrong Naveen Bhaiya? I am so sorry to have let you down.'* *Naveen Bhaiya* said, *'On my way back in the car with the funders, they had many questions for me. Some of those questions, I can guarantee that you could have answered it much better than me. If I remember correctly, they asked you also some of those questions. You were so busy trying to share information, that you forgot to listen to them. If you had taken the time to listen to what they were saying,*

answered some of their questions and then continued with what you had to share, it would have made a lot more sense to them. In this situation, because they did not have clarity to some basic information, they were not able to keep pace with you. What use is the information if someone is not able to keep pace with you? The true mark of good communication and confidence is not about how much you are able to talk and share accurate information. It is also about how much you can listen, your ability to understand what they are asking/ trying to say and then sharing your points in a way that they will understand. Do you get what I am saying?'

(pause)

I was a bit shocked. *Naveen Bhaiya* then explained to me about how the whole visit could have been a conversation where we spoke and exchanged ideas with each other rather than a one way download of information. *Naveen Bhaiya* was so right. I wanted to share everything that I had planned for that I did not give anyone a chance to ask any questions. I just continued and did not care if it was making sense to anyone. I was terribly embarrassed, but *Naveen Bhaiya* was incredibly supportive and told me that these things happen, and we should learn and move on from it.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, this was my embarrassing story where I learnt a lesson so big and valuable. Being able to communicate is not just about saying what you have to say. You must be able to listen to the other person, understand what they are saying and respond to that. That is what makes it more meaningful, ***the ability to listen***.

(pause)

I have been trying my best to listen and respond in the last one week. I also try and use gestures to show that I am listening, like nodding or smiling etc. Sometimes, I even take a book with me and write down important points as I am listening to different people. But I wanted to ask you, do you have any ideas or suggestions where we can all do this well - listen and respond? If you do, write to me, and let me know. I would love to try new things.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now and write a report about the funder visit. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 7

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of listening and responding to the funders from her letter?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) How do you practice the skill of listening and understanding what the other person is saying?
- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Listening is a very important skill when it comes to communication.
- 2) It is more important to have a two-way communication where you listen, understand and respond to someone, rather than share what is in your mind
- 3) There are many tools and tips you can use – pay attention, avoid distraction, make notes, use your body language positively (smiling, nodding etc.)
- 4) This is not a skill you will use with just funders or senior people. This is something you should use with everyone, including CRPs, farmers, community and your family members

Letter 8 – Sharing Constructive Feedback

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing? You must be busy with all the preparation for the next season. Thank you for all your ideas and suggestions after my last letter. There are really interesting, and I will try some of them.

(pause)

Do you remember about my CRP Meera? I had written to you about her long ago, when she wanted to quit on her first day. I am happy to inform you that it has been 3 months since she joined and is doing very well. She has got the confidence now and is able to talk to many farmers and do meetings on her own. I feel extremely happy to see her growth over the last few months.

(pause)

Yesterday, I was talking to another Cluster Coordinator from my block, *Rathna ji*. She has joined few months ago, and she is learning about working with a team of diverse CRPs. We were having lunch under the tree outside our block office from our dubbas and she looked incredibly stressed and tired. I asked her what happened. *Rathnaji* said, *'Don't ask Sahuri ji. I am struggling to work with my CRPs. How much ever I try, whatever I do, does not seem to work. I do not know what to do. How do you do it Sahuri ji? Meera who joined you was so demotivated and did not have many skills, but today, she seems so eager to learn. Last week in the Block meeting, you could clearly make out the difference in her approach and thinking.'*

(pause)

I smiled at her and said, *'You will also pick up Rathna ji. You are still new and learning how to do this, but you will be able to do this with ease in a few months from now.'* *Rathna ji* was not convinced, and she looked like she was going to start crying. So, I said, *'Ok Rathna ji, let me try and think of what I do and how I help my team. Maybe you will get some tips from there.'* *Rathna ji's* eyes all lit up and she said, *'Yes, please tell me what you do. Any help from you will be great. I am struggling right now.'*

(pause)

'Ok, let me start with Meera and how the last three months have been. This may give you some ideas. You already know how she wanted to quit in her first week and was very underconfident when she started. After I convinced her to stay back, I knew I had to pay special attention to her, otherwise we might lose her. I visited her regularly, guided her on what to do, sometimes I showed her how to do a certain thing. I kept in touch with her constantly. Maybe that was what helped,' I said.

(pause)

Rathna ji said, *'Even I do all of what you said. I spend a lot of time with my CRPs explaining what to do. I don't know why it doesn't help me.'* This question made me think harder on what else I did with Meera. After some thought and reflection, I said, *'Rathna ji, you are right that all of us do these things with our CRPs. One of the things I learnt from my guru Jagriti Didi is to constantly close the feedback loop with people we work with. I try and follow it in as many situations as I can. I am also still learning about it, but I try my best.'*



(pause)

Rathna ji looked a bit confused. 'What loop? What feedback are you talking about?' she asked. I said, 'When I worked with Jagruti Didi, she would sit with me once in two weeks and have a conversation about my performance. She would always ask me, 'how was your last two weeks? What did you do well? What did you not do so well? What could you have done better?' I used to look forward to these discussions as it helped me think about what I did and what I could have done better. Once I shared my thoughts with her, she would add to it and tell me what she thought of my performance. She would say a few things I did well and a few things I could have done better. She would give me some ideas and suggestions on what else I could do.'

(pause)

Rathna ji was listening intently, so I carried on. 'These conversations really helped me to perform better and move ahead. I felt like someone was investing so much effort and time to make me better. When she had praises for me and how I did a good job, she would always share it in front of many people and make me feel special. When I did something wrong, she never shouted at me in front of others. Once we were alone, she told me what I had done wrong, so I could correct it. All of these tips really helped me, and I have been following it with my team for some time now.'

(pause)

'With Meera, I discuss her performance once in two weeks. I try and go there to do the discussion in person, but if I cannot, I do it over the phone. I try my best not to miss it. I give her regular feedback on what I see. It could be something she has done well, or somewhere she has gone wrong. This way, her confidence level has increased in the last 3 months. She has started being more independent in the way she works. Like Jagriti didi used to say, 'Praise in public, correct in private.'

(pause)

Rathna ji said, 'This is a great technique. How did Meera react to you giving her feedback every 15 days? Because I do not think anyone else does that?' I said, 'Meera has reacted very positively to all the feedback I have been giving her. In fact, she proactively asked me yesterday after the meeting with the farmers on how she had done and what she can improve. It is hard for people to ask for feedback and accept it. We have to give it to them in a way that they understand and in small doses. You cannot give full year's feedback in one meeting: that's too much. You cannot give only negative feedback; you have to balance it with the positive. It is not like they are not doing anything good, call it out whenever you can. You also have to be specific and share examples of what they did, when you give feedback. If you give generic feedback like, 'you always do this; you never are able to...' then it does not make sense. You should say, 'In the last meeting, I noticed that you gave them wrong information about the wheat crop, which could impact their yield.' The more specific we are, the more CRPs are able to understand us.'

(pause)

Rathna ji was looking a lot more relieved by the time I finished. She thanked me and said she will try this over the next few weeks to see if it works for her. I am so glad she asked me so many questions, it helped me reflect on what I do with my CRPs to help them. Jagriti didi has helped me in so many ways without realising it. I am so grateful to her.



(pause)

So, my dear friends. Do you think this feedback loop is helpful? Will you try it? I would love to hear from you after you have tried it.

Ok, I have to go meet Meera now. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 8

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of sharing feedback and closing the loop?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) How did you manage to share feedback with your team? How do you balance between the positive and the negative feedback?
- 4) How often do you think you should share feedback? How can you be more specific while you share feedback?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Sharing feedback is a great tool for managing team and helping CRPs manage their performance
- 2) Feedback should be shared in a positive and non-threatening manner. Be specific about what you mean and share examples
- 3) Share feedback immediately, do not wait for the season end or formal reviews!
- 4) Praise in public; correct in private

Letter 9 – Planning and Prioritising Tasks

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am glad you liked my last letter and have shared some wonderful responses. Please write to me soon and tell me about your experiences and learnings you have had over the last few months.

(pause)

Last two weeks have been very hectic for me. I was worried that I will not get time to write to you, but somehow I managed to make time. I had so many things going on at the same time. I had to attend a training program in the block office that was conducted by someone from the Head Office. Every day we spent 4 hours in the training. I must add that it was an extremely helpful training program, but I could not complete all my other activities. I had new CRPs joining, we were in the middle of the harvest season and so many farmers wanted help on so many things. To add to all that, Anita and Deepu, my children, had their exams. I had to be around when they studied so I could help them if they needed anything. I felt like 24 hours in a day was not enough for me. After spending all day working also, I felt like many things were not completed. Do you ever feel like that? Do you ever feel like you are racing against time and not getting anywhere? What do you do? How do you manage?

(pause here and get some responses)

I am sure you have some great ideas on how to manage your time and multiple priorities. Will you take out a few minutes and write to me? I am really struggling with this, so I need your help to figure it out. Write to me about what you do to manage your time better.

(pause)

I also spoke to two people to see if they can help me. They have both given me different ideas and I am going to try it to see if it works. Why don't you also try it as well and let me know if it worked for you?

(pause)

Yesterday, when I reached the block office, I went straight to meet *Ali bhaiya*. He was writing something in his notebook, so I waited for him to finish. After he finished writing, I went up to him and told him about the problem I was having with managing all the work that I had to do. *Ali bhaiya* patiently listen to me and said, '*Sahuri, even I face this problem many times and I've tried many things to help me plan my day better. Let me share with you one technique that has worked best for me. You may have noticed me writing in my diary every morning. What do you think I write?*' I thought for a few minutes and said, '*I am not sure Ali Bhaiya, maybe you are writing about all the things you need to do.*'

(pause)

Ali bhaiya said, '*Yes absolutely. Every morning I come to work and before starting anything that I want to do, I write down all the things that I need to do for that day. I make a list and number it, so it becomes my 'to-do' list for the day. I then code it as 'A, B and C'. That means, I simple write either 'A, B or C' in brackets next to the to-do item. I write 'A' in brackets for all the tasks that I have to complete first and it needs to be done today. I write*



'B' in brackets for all the tasks I need to complete second. I write 'C' for all the tasks that I can complete last, or it is okay if I complete it even the next day. This way I have a list of tasks I need to do for that particular day, and I have also prioritised it using the code ABC.'

(pause)

'I keep looking at my to-do list through the day to ensure that I am on track and I am able to complete all that I have written down. There are days that I can complete everything on my list and there are days that I'm only able to do 3 or 4 things. In that case my To-Do List gets spilt over to the next day. This has worked very well for me as I have used it for more than 5 years. You should try this. I am quite sure you will feel happy when you complete each task, and put a tick against it. End of the day when you see so many ticks against all the tasks you have completed, you feel happy.'

(pause)

'There are also many times that I have planned my day, and I get request for some data or information from the District office or Head office. It is usually an urgent request and they want it on the same day. I write them in my notebook and code it as 'A'. I have to then replan some of my to-do items and complete them the next day. These are unavoidable situations and the best way to deal with them is to be prepared, rather than get upset or angry.'

I was amazed with what *Ali bhैया* shared. It seems like a very simple way to plan my day and ensure it is executed. I am going to try this and see if it works for me.

(pause)

Yesterday, was the last day of our training in the block office as well. In that training program we spoke about many things. Our trainer was very friendly, and she encouraged us to ask as many questions as we could. I took this chance and asked her how we could plan multiple priorities. I also told her that I was struggling to plan and complete all my activities.

(pause)

My trainer, Sheela ji said, 'There is one technique that I really like and have used it for many years. It is called the urgent, important table. You have to draw a 2X2 table and write urgent on one side, and important on the other side. Every time you write a task into that table, you need to think if it is urgent or important. Urgent means something that needs to be completed on the same day. Important means it is a critical task and needs a lot of attention. It may not be required to be completed on the same day, but a lot of thought and effort needs to be put into completing that activity. Therefore, we need to allocate enough time to ensure we complete that task. There could be tasks that are urgent and important. This urgent important table helps you understand what needs to be done and delivered on the same day and as well as over the next 2 or 3 days. This is a great planning and prioritization tool that you can use to make your life easier.'

(pause. Draw this table on a flip chart/ white board before the session. Share it with them at this point.)

H i g h		
U R G E N T		
L o w	Low	High

(pause)

I thanked my trainer and tried to write down all my tasks into this urgent important table. As I was writing down all my tasks, I realised that I was able to identify urgent and important tasks. For ex – I had to send out the weekly farmer report to District Team. This was urgent. I had to help Meera create the farmer list for profiling season adoption. This was important and I need to spend time with Meera on this. I am going to try both these methods and see if it helps me. I will pick one and start getting more organized at my work.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, do you think these are good ideas that you can implement. Please write to me with your thoughts and ideas. I will be waiting for them eagerly.

(pause)

Okay, I have to go now. I am going to make my 'To Do' List for tomorrow. Let us see how that comes out. I will write you soon to let you know.

Until then take care stay safe unhealthy.

Your friend.

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 9

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you think of the two techniques shared by Sahuri in this letter?

- 2) How have you planned and managed your time in the past? Share some examples on what you do.

- 3) Why do you think it is important to plan and prioritise our activities? How will it help you?

- 4) How can you help your team plan their tasks and activities better?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) It is important to plan and prioritise your tasks, so you do not miss out on anything
- 2) There are many ways to plan and prioritise your activities. Two of these techniques are shared in the letter. You can use any other technique of your own
- 3) Importance of understanding the difference between urgent and important
- 4) Importance of helping the CRPs plan their day and tasks, especially around the seasons

Letter 10 – Monitor and Track CRPs

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today. Did you try any of the techniques I shared with you the last time? Did it help you? I am incredibly happy to tell you that I started using the urgent, important table to write down my tasks for the day. It has helped me immensely. I feel like I can control and complete my tasks on time. We have started using this at our block office as well and we can see the progress of our block.

(pause)

So much has changed from the time I started writing to you. My team has grown, I have 10 CRPs that are working with me. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed! 10 CRPs, how do I keep track of who is doing what, how to work with each one of them as they all have joined us at different times. Some are new and need a lot of handholding; some have been in the program for a long time and they know everything about a season, I don't need to support them too much. It is so hard to keep track. Do you feel the same way?

(pause)

I have to tell you about a funny incident that happened last week. We had our block meeting with all the CRPs, this was going to be the first time we were meeting in-person after the COVID-19 pandemic. For the last one year, we have not been able to get everyone together physically for any meetings or trainings. I really missed that. Just seeing all the CRP sisters in one room and their energy and excitement, used to make me happy. Last week when we met, there were about 60 CRPs who came for the meeting. It was like old days, the energy, excitement, it was amazing.

(pause)

We had a day long review with *Ali Bhaiya, Naveen Bhaiya and a few other Bhaiyas and Didis* from the district office. As a part of the capacity building process, the District Team asked each CRP to come up in front of the group and talk about how the last year was and what they had achieved. The CRPs were given 15 mins to plan before they could speak. There was a lot of noise and confusion. All of us *Cluster Coordinators* were talking to our respective CRPs to help them with what they need to say. It was amazing to see all the excitement.

(pause)

15 mins were up, and slowly, one by one each of the CRPs were invited to the front of the room to share their progress. Some CRPs were extremely nervous, they could barely say a word. Some of them said whatever they could but we could not make a lot of sense of it. Some of them were really good. They shared their thoughts clearly and crisply. They even received a round of applause for their small speech. It was fantastic to see all the CRPs. I was reminded of my early days when I started. I used to be just like them.

(pause)

Once the meeting was over, a lot of the other Cluster Coordinators from my block came up to me and said, *'Sahuri, your CRPs were able to speak about their achievements and performance so well! What did you do to train them?'* When they said that, I was a bit

shocked. I had not done anything to train them as we got only 15 mins to prepare. I thought it may have been just some stroke of luck that most of my CRPs were able to talk about what they did.

(pause)

The next day, we had the same exercise for the Cluster Coordinators along with the District Team. We were required to talk about our achievements over the last one year. I was really not sure what to talk about as I felt like I had not done anything different. Just then Naveen Bhaiya came to me and said, *'Sahuri, you should talk about how you have helped your CRPs get to this level of confidence and clarity about their performance'*. I said, *'But Naveen Bhaiya, I didn't do anything yesterday. Whatever they did, it was on their own'*. Naveen Bhaiya said, *'You may have not done anything yesterday, but you have done something over the last one year with your CRPs and it has clearly showed up in our meeting yesterday. Think about it and share it with the rest of the team. We can all learn a thing or two from it.'*

(pause)

I thought really hard about what I had done with my CRPs and started making a note of it in my notebook. When my turn came, I was nervous. I was not sure if what I was going to say would make any sense to others. I started, *'Naveen Bhaiya has asked me to share what I have done with my team of CRPs to increase their confidence and clarity. Quite honestly, I am not sure if this really helped, but let me share with you what I did. Last year, before COVID-19 even started, I had 4 CRPs I was working with. Just with 4 CRPs, I found it hard to keep track of what they had done and what needs to be completed. I came up with an idea at that time.'*

(pause)

'I asked each CRP to keep a CRP book, just like the way we have a farmer book. I told them to write down all key developments, points in that book. Every week, when I visited them, we would discuss how the week was, what was achieved and what the focus was for next week. The CRPs would make a note of that in the book. They got into the habit of writing and preparing for our weekly meetings.'

(pause)

'At the end of every month, we looked at the four weeks that went by and identified 3 things:

- *What did the CRP do well?*
- *What could the CRP have done differently?*
- *What is the focus for the next month?*

These three things really helped us stay focused on priorities month on month. It also helped me be focused on a few areas that I wanted to teach or coach them on. It helped both of us keep track of all the things we had done over the last one year.

(pause)

'Over a period of time, this became a habit. Even if I am not able to visit a CRP that week, she writes it down in her book and sends me a photo or we talk about it the next week. Even during COVID-19, when I could not go very often to their villages, they sent me photos and we used to talk about this on the phone. It has been very helpful for me. I know where each of my CRPs are and what I need to work with them on.'



(pause)

'I am not sure if this would have helped, but this is what I have done religiously over the last one year,' I said. I looked around the room and everyone was smiling and nodding. Naveen Bhaiya started clapping and said, 'Well done Sahuri. This simple technique of asking your CRP to keep a book and keep writing every week their reflections, their achievements and their shortcomings has really helped. You can make out by the clarity and the confidence they demonstrated yesterday. This is a very good practice and I urge all the Cluster coordinators also to follow it'. I was a little embarrassed, but also happy that he appreciated me in front of the whole team. I noticed how Naveen Bhaiya also has practices 'praise in public; correct in private' method.

(pause)

This CRP book has also helped me look at targets and what the CRPs have achieved against the targets. I have been able to share data faster with *Ali bhaiya and the MIS team.*

(pause)

After the meeting, many cluster coordinators came to me asking me to show them how a CRP book looks like. I had one with me and I shared it with them. I guess this is what has helped me keep track of the 10 CRPs I have. Otherwise, it would have been difficult to remember every small detail and what happened 6-7 months back. Sometimes, I click photo of a few pages of the CRP book that I think will be important for me later.

(pause)

Rathna ji, the other cluster coordinator said, 'But Sahuri ji, what if the CRP is not interested in maintaining this CRP book? What if they think it is additional work and feel demotivated?' I told her, 'Rathna ji, this is a great question. I have always left the choice of maintaining this book to the CRP. If they feel like it will be additional work, I do not force them. If they see benefit in it, I encourage them to keep it. One of my CRPs does not like writing very much, so she records voice message on whatsapp and sends it to me. We use the whatsapp voice messages instead of writing. The main idea is to get the CRP to reflect and think about their performance. How they keep a track is not so important. This is only for their reference and they do not need to submit it to anyone.' Rathna ji was happy with my explanation and she said she will try it with a few CRPs.

(pause)

I am happy that my hard work paid off. So, my dear friends, what do you think of the CRP book idea? Will you try it? Will you help your CRPs become more confident and get more clarity? Let me know what you think. Write to me, I am always eagerly waiting for your letters.

(pause)

Okay, I have to go now. I have to talk to one of my CRPs who could not come to the meeting yesterday and give her an update on what she missed. I will write you soon to let you know.

Until then take care stay safe unhealthy.

Your friend.

Sahuri



Reflection questions after Letter 10

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you think about Sahuri's idea of keeping a CRP book?

- 2) Have you done anything similar to track and monitor CRPs? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) How did you manage to track and monitor all your CRPs?

- 4) How do you think this CRP book will benefit your team?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Importance of monitoring and tracking your CRPs to help them develop and grow
- 2) Importance of regular reflection, discussion, and review of progress
- 3) Importance of making your CRPs responsible for their own growth and development
- 4) Importance of keeping the process simple and easy to follow

Letter 11 – Simplify complex, technical information

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Thank you for all your letters and your responses. It has been really nice reading about all of them and learning from you. Please keep them coming, would love to hear a lot more on what your experiences and stories are.

(pause)

I had an extremely exciting last few weeks and I have been waiting to write to you so I can share my experiences. 2 weeks ago, our organization and one other organization in the South of India, Andhra Pradesh had an exchange program. About 10 people from our organization went to Andhra and 10 people from their organization came to our state. This was done so we could learn from each other and share ideas to make both our work more impactful.

(pause)

We got a notice from the head office about this some time ago and they ask us to nominate ourselves if we were interested to go. Based on the nominations, they would pick the team for the exchange program. I really wanted to go and explore this opportunity. I was not sure how Mukesh ji, my husband and my mother-in-law would react to this. It would mean I would be away from home for 1 week. I anyway asked them if I could go. Initially they were a bit hesitant because of the COVID-19 pandemic and if I would be safe in another place all by myself. I somehow convinced them, and they said I could go. I was so excited to be traveling on my own so far away from home.

(pause)

All of last week we were in Andhra Pradesh going to different villages, learning about different farming practices they follow, looking at all the different ideas they have. It was amazing. Initially I thought that we will have a problem because of language, as I thought many of them may not speak Hindi, but I was surprised to see that their Hindi was not bad at all. We were able to communicate very well. All the people we met were so passionate about farming and empowering farmers. I was so inspired by meeting all of them.

(pause)

I have to tell you about this lady I met during my stay. She has become my new role model and I really aspire to be like her. Her name is *Alka ji*, she was one of the trainers we had been assigned to, for the last one week we were in AP. Do you know what was so special about her? My dear friends, she is very much like you and me, she has been a CRP at one point and has grown in her job and organization. She is a 'Master Trainer' now and she trains everyone who needs to work in the community.

(pause)

Alka ji comes from a family of farmers and she has been working in this organization for the last 15 years. Her technical knowledge is very strong. She knows all there is to know about seeds, crops, fertilizers, harvesting, water conservation etc. She will always have a

ready answer if you ask her a question. Everyone in the organization would also say, 'Ask *Alka ji*, she will be able to give you these answers.' This was really inspiring for me.

(pause)

I remember every time I asked her a question, she was able to explain it very well to me. I felt like I will never forget the answer for the rest of my life. One of the evenings when our training was over, I went up to *Alka ji* to ask her how she does this. I was not sure how she will react, but I was going to ask her anyway.

(pause)

I said, '*Alka ji*, you are so knowledgeable and can explain any concept so nicely. How do you do this? Can you teach me?' She laughed and said, 'Thank you *Sahuri*. You can also do it very easily with practice. There are very simple rules I follow when I am sharing any technical information, especially with the community members. It has helped me get them to understand the concept better. I will tell you what they are:

(pause)

1. Always try and use a story, an example, or an experience while you are trying to explain something. People understand it better when you share it like a story. For ex – Look at all our videos that we have created to share information. It starts like a story and then the information is embedded into that story.
2. When the information is very technical, break it down into small parts. Share one part at a time, ask them questions to ensure they have understood it, before you go to the next part. If they do not understand the first part, then there is no using telling them the whole thing.
3. Whenever you get a chance, use pictures, or draw it out to help you explain what you mean. On my phone, I have lot of pictures of farms, crops, plants, insects, chemicals etc. Whenever I have to explain something, I pull out my phone and share a relevant picture. It then becomes easy to explain the rest of it

(pause)

As far as possible, try not to use too many technical words or short forms. This usually confuses our CRPs and farmers in the community. You have to make it as simple as possible for yourself and the others. Do you understand?' I said, 'Yes *Alka ji*, now that you say it, I understand what you mean. You have shared so many stories with us of your village, your CRPs and you trying to explain some points to us. I in fact remember the points because the stories were so interesting.'

(pause)

Alka ji said I should practice for a few months and call her if I got stuck. I have already been practicing it after I came back, and it is helping me explain some technical aspects much better. I am going to try and use this in my day-to-day conversations as well.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, what do you think of *Alka ji's* idea of trying to communicate long, complex information in our training programs and meetings? Do you think this is something you can also try? Write to me if you have tried it and what has been your experience.



(pause)

Ok, I have a training program tomorrow so I will go prepare examples and stories for it. I will write to you soon.

Until then take care stay safe unhealthy.

Your friend.

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 11

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you think about Alka ji's idea of breaking down complex information into simple, story led discussions?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) What are some other ways you have been able to share technical, complex information?
- 4) How can you help your CRPs do the same when they work with the community/farmers?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) It is important to break down complex, technical information into simple language
- 2) Use stories, examples and ideas that helps communicate the message (like what Sahuri is doing with us)
- 3) Avoid using jargons. Not everyone is technically sound, and they may not understand the jargons
- 4) Help your CRPs do the same in their community meetings

Letter 12 – Big Picture for the CRPs

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today. Have you practiced any of the techniques we have spoken about for the last few months? Please write to me and I would love to hear about how my letters may have helped you? Should I continue writing to you? Do you see any value in them?

(pause)

I am really upset and sad today. I feel like I have failed so miserably at something that has been so important for me and my organization. Do you remember my CRP Shanta? She is the one who got married and came to one of the villages. She was a CRP before she got married also and decided to continue after marriage. Her husband is supportive and encouraged her to do this along with all the housework.

(pause)

A few weeks ago, I went to visit her in her village. She was glowing and smiling when she saw me. She came and gave me a hug and said, *'Didi, guess what! I am going to be a mother! God has listened to my prayers. After 2 years of marriage, I have been able to conceive. Now I don't have to listen to the taunts of my mother-in-law and rest of the village that I don't have children. I am going to be a mother, Didi! I am so happy'*. Looking at her excitement, I was also incredibly happy. I congratulated her and told her I was very happy for her. Being a mother has given me so much satisfaction and to see Anita and Deepu grow up into strong individuals, makes me very proud.

(pause)

We spent the next 15-20 mins talking about motherhood and her ideas of how she wanted to bring up the child. She wanted a baby girl, and she would name her 'Prerena' and would send her to school, make her a big officer etc. etc. etc. I could clearly see that this baby meant the world to her and I was not sure if she would have time to do anything else. Looking at the right opportunity, I asked her, *'What about your work and your role as a CRP, Shanta?'*

(pause)

I could see her face suddenly drop. She said, *'Didi, you know it better than me that this role has given me a lot of name, credibility in the village and some money that I can call mine. I have been saving up all these years so I can buy my child whatever he/she wants and give them a better life than I had. I would love to continue to work, so I can do the same for the rest of my life. I think my husband is also in agreement. But my mother-in-law will not allow for it. She has been unhappy about me working from the beginning. I used to get up early, do all my household chores before I left so she did not get a chance to complain. Now with the baby coming, she has clearly told me to stop working and be at home.'*

(pause)

My heart sank when I heard this. Shanta has so much potential. She is really good at her work and she has always been an over achiever. I do not have to tell her anything, she does all the work on her on. Proactively she reaches out to me to ask for more things to



do. I was hoping that at some point she could become a Cluster Coordinator like me and take on more responsibilities.

(pause)

'If she agrees, will you continue working Shanta? Will you be able to manage the child and work?' I asked. Shanta said, 'Yes Didi! I will work harder; I will manage my time. My sister is getting married to my brother-in-law next month. She will come stay with us and I can take her help to manage the baby when I am not at home. I will not even trouble my mother-in-law to manage the baby. But she is very adamant and does not want me to work.' Shanta started sobbing. I patted her hand and told her not to stress herself in this state. I told her that I will come speak to her mother-in-law in the next visit. *'Really Didi! You will do that for me? You will convince her?'* *'Yes Shanta. I will, don't worry about it now, cheer up',* I said.

(pause)

The next week I went to see Shanta's mother-in-law in her home. I had seen her and spoke to her many times before during community meetings and my visits to the village, but I did not know her very well. I said, *'Namaste Amma ji, how are you doing? Congratulations! You are going to be a grandmother! You must be so excited about the soon to be addition to your family.'* She said, *'Namaste, thank you so much Sahuri ji. Yes, I am very happy. If I get a grandson, I can die peacefully after I see his face.'* I said, *'Grandson or granddaughter, what is important is that you have a healthy baby in the family. And why will you die, you have to see your grandchild achieve big things in life.'*

(pause)

I said, *'Amma ji, I wanted to talk to you about Shanta and her job today. She is exceptionally good in her job, one of the best CRPs we have in the entire block. She is hardworking, committed and a quick learner. She has learned all of her work really fast.'*

'Yes, but what is the point, anyway she has to be at home, make rotis and raise children at the end of it. Her father allowed her to do all this, and we allowed her to continue, but I really do not like all this. Going from farm to farm, talking to farmers. What is the need! God has given us enough and we can manager. Now the baby is coming, who will take care of the baby if she is out the whole day. It is best for her to quit and focus on managing the house,' she said.

(pause)

'Amma ji, now the world is changing. Women can do both, they can manage their homes, their children as well as work. Now-a-days, there is nothing that a woman cannot do, we have so many doctors, engineers, lawyers, in fact we have women who have gone to the moon also. If all of them thought that managing home and children are the only important things, we would have not seen so much growth. It is not just about the next 3 or 5 years Amma ji, it is about a woman's entire life. Now you are comfortable, and God has given you enough. God forbid, if there is a crisis then what will you do? You cannot depend on one person or one thing to see you through for the rest of your life,' I said.

(pause)



Amma ji was not convinced. She said, *'All this is good to say and hear, do you think our daughters and daughter in laws will go to the moon. Those things are impossible. They must be some rich, privileged people who can afford all this. These things don't happen to us.'*

(pause)

'That maybe true, we cannot debate that Amma ji, but it is not like they were born Doctors or Engineers or went to the moon without any hardships. It was all a journey. It probably started with simple steps like let us finish school, let us finish college, let us do a job. Slowly they have grown. But if they thought, no I have to stay home to take care of the child, then they may have not reached there. Think about it Amma ji, everyone goes through a journey and you need the whole family to support you on this journey,' I said. I was trying very hard but Amma ji was just shaking her head indicated that she did not believe in all this.

(pause)

'Let us take Shanta for example. You said she cannot do something big or go to the moon. But let us see what she can do. If she continued working, contributed well to the community, she can start charging for her services. She can talk to farmers and if they need help with the harvesting or sowing season, she can share her expertise for a small fee. She does not need to be aligned to one organization like ours, she can earn her own money. Like you have a doctor in the village you go to, she can be the doctor for farming. People can come to her for latest technology, connections to get seeds, get into organic farming and much more.'

(pause)

'Today she does it in one village, she can slowly start going to neighbouring villages. She can go to 10-15 villages and play the same role. Imagine how that would be! If any Government schemes come up for farmers and they are looking for someone, let us say like we have our 'ASHAs', she can be selected. She can manage the Farmer Resource Center some day and become an entrepreneur. She can join an organization like ours and do the kind of job I am doing, which is of a Cluster Coordinator. There are many opportunities for her if she continues. All she needs is the support of her family.'

(pause)

Amma ji, still was looking at me very sceptical. I pulled out my *bhramastra*. I said, *'Amma ji, Shanta will be making some money out of all of this. This can contribute to your family income. Looking after the children's school expenses, your medication, small alterations to the house, she can contribute to all of that. If she continues, she will have to potential to earn a lot more that she is earning right now.'*

(pause)

I went on for another 15 mins and continued to tell Amma ji about all the benefits. Finally, she said, *'Ok, I get what you are saying, not right now but. I want Shanta to stay home during her pregnancy and first 2 years of the baby. Let the baby become little bit older, we will see.'* While I was glad that she was open to the idea, I was not happy that she wanted Shanta to quit right away.

(pause)

I looked at Shanta and she was sobbing again. I thanked Amma ji and said, I will visit again. I told Shanta to stay strong and not give up on her dream. If it does not happen today, it will happen tomorrow. She needs to make it happen. She needs to continue



talking about it at home and not let people forget about it. I told her that I will visit her again in a couple of months and talk to her mother-in-law again.

(pause)

My dear friends, I am so disappointed that I could not help Shanta. I really want her to have the life she is dreaming of. I am not going to give up as well. I will keep going to their house and talking to Amma ji as much as possible. Would you have done something different? Would you have helped Shanta in any other way? Write to me and let me know.

(pause)

Ok, I am truly exhausted. I am going to go home and make myself a nice cup of tea and rest for some time. I will write to you soon.

Until then take care stay safe unhealthy.

Your friend.

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 12

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of trying to convince Amma ji to let Shanta continue her job?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) How can you keep your CRPs engaged and motivated to see the big picture? How can you help them convince their family?

- 4) What else do you think Sahuri could have done? What could she have tried?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Important to show CRPs the big picture. What is possible, what would their journey look like, what would be their growth?
- 2) It is important to focus on the here and now but also on the long term
- 3) Continuously motivate and inspire CRPs and show them what their future might look like

Facilitated Session after Set 2 letters

- Core team is required to conduct a session of reflection before starting the Set 3 of Sahuri letters
- The objective of this session is to get the FCs to reflect on their learnings and write a letter to Sahuri.

Time	Session
10 mins	<p>Check in</p> <p>Welcome the participants. Tell them that today you did not receive any letter from Sahuri. She has said that she wants to hear from you on how you are doing and what is going on with you. She has requested me to talk to you and get all the information.</p>
45 to 50 mins	<p>Reflection Activity</p> <p>Tell the FCs that it has been 1 year since Sahuri has been writing to you. We will do a small exercise to consolidate all our learnings</p> <p>Divide the FCs into smaller groups of 3 or 4 people each. Given them all a chart paper and some sketch pens. Ask them to make a visual chart (with limited writing/ text) that depicts the changes they have seen in themselves for the last 1 year.</p> <p>Give them 20-25 mins to discuss and put together the chart. Give them about 5-10 mins to present their chart. Ask them if they will be comfortable for you to video record the same. Video record it and share it back with the design team.</p> <p>Get each of the teams to ask questions/ clarifications from the other team. They can also add their own learnings if they are able to relate to a point.</p> <p>Reinforce some of the key concepts discussed during the Sahuri letters.</p> <p>Summarise all the discussion.</p>
10 mins	<p>Wrap up and close</p> <p>Tell them that you will share these letters with Sahuri and come back in next 10-15 days with another letter from Sahuri.</p> <p>Ask them if they want to ask Sahuri for a specific experience or scenario they are struggling with. Make a note of these and share it back with the program team.</p> <p>Thank them and close the meeting</p>



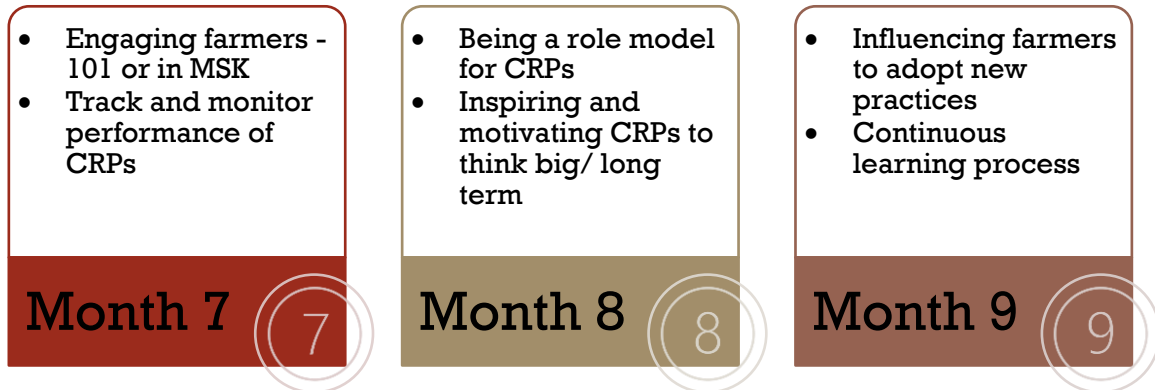
People's Action for National Integration - PANI

Sahuri Letters — Set 3

Field Coordinator Capacity Building Program
Program Swera
Dec' 2021

Sahuri Letters – Set 3

Broad Guidelines to implement these letters:



1) Preparation:

- Attend the briefing session conducted by Phicus. After the session, facilitators will practice reading the letters aloud a few times to understand the context and the flow. Anticipate any questions that may come from the Field Coordinators and prepare for the same
- Increase your understanding about the topic, to enable you to answer any questions that come your way
- Coordinate with the Block Coordinator to fix up a time when all the Field Coordinators are available. You will need 1 hour for this session

2) Implementation:

- Get all the Field Coordinators to sit in a circle and create a friendly environment
- Tell them that you have received a letter that is addressed to them. This letter is from Sahuri, and you have been requested to read out this letter
- Ask them to make a note of any questions that is coming to their mind. Let them allow you to read the whole letter before asking questions
- Read the letter out loudly with the correct tone, pause and emotions
- Once you have read the letter, ask the team if they understood the letter or want you to read it again. Read it again if required

3) Discussion:

- After every letter, you will find a set of questions to ask the team. Ask those questions and get the group to discuss their thoughts
- Create a safe and open space to have these conversations. Encourage them to share their points
- Capture some key points shared by the group in the feedback form and share it with the core team/ design team at PANI/ Phicus
- Remember that the letter is only a tool to help you have a rich conversation about the topic. Talk more about the topic in the letter, rather than Sahuri or her story!

In times of COVID-19, you may have to conduct Virtual Sahuri sessions.

- 1) Preparation before zoom call
 - a) Facilitator will need to record the audio file of Sahuri letter and save it in your mobile
 - b) Schedule the zoom call with the block team
 - c) Inform all the participants to select a silent place to connect which has good internet connectivity

- 2) Virtual session
 - a) Greet all the participants and build context for the letter reading session over Zoom call
 - b) Before sharing the audio file, inform the participants that, we have received the Sahuri letter, but due to the pandemic we are not able to share this letter with them in person. The audio recording of the letter will be shared on WhatsApp your reference. Next time when we meet in person, we will share that letter with all of you which is kept safe in the envelop.
 - c) Share the audio file with all the participants over a WhatsApp group and ask them to download. Ensure that everyone downloads the audio file.
 - d) During the session, give them a 15 min break so they can listen to the letter. After listening to the audio file, ask them to log back into the call
 - e) After 15 minutes, ensure all participants have logged back in. Facilitate the discussion by asking questions to everyone. Make sure everyone participates in the discussion.
 - f) While ending the call, share the feedback link with everyone and ask them to fill.

Letter 13 – Engaging Farmers

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I hope all of you are safe and taking care of yourselves and your family. Me and my family are doing well. My mother-in-law was not well for the last couple of weeks, by God's grace she is doing fine now. It was really hectic for me to manage the house, children and my work. Now, our field visits have restarted, so I am really busy visiting all the farmers after a long break during lockdown.

(pause)

I am sure you also could not visit the farmers and have meetings for a long time because of COVID. How did you manage to stay in touch with them and help them? I am curious to know, please do write to me about anything new you tried during lockdown and what were the results. Today I visited one of the women's farmer groups after almost 6 months. It was really exciting to see them after so long.

(pause)

Do you remember Shanta, my CRP who resigned because of her pregnancy? I am still trying to find ways to bring her back and I am sure one day she will be back. But in the meantime, I had to hire another CRP from that village to take forward Shanta's work. Her name is Kanta, and she is really bright. The only problem is that she is taking Shanta's position and Shanta had done a really good job in the last few years. Many farmers would reach out to her for help and support without any hesitation. I have to work with Kanta very closely and help her get to that level. It is going to be exciting in the few months working with her. Since Kanta is new and she was meeting the farmer group for the first time, I told her that I will help her conduct this meeting.

(pause)

When I reached the village, Kanta had already organized this meeting in the open-air ground of the primary school. She has ensured that people were not sitting too close to each other, and they were wearing their masks. She was standing in one corner and the farmers were all seated down and were talking amongst themselves. When she saw me, her face lit up. She said, *'Didi, I was so worried that you won't be able to make it and I had to do the meeting alone. I don't know what I would have done.'* *'Don't worry, I am here now. We both can do the meeting.'* I smiled at her and sat down with the farmers.

(pause)

The minute I sat down, all the farmers started talking to me, asking about my health and my mothers-in-law's health. I told them a little bit about what was going on at home. They also enquired about Shanta and why she was not continuing as a CRP. I explained to them about Shanta's pregnancy and how it was important for her to take care of her health, especially since we are in the middle of this pandemic.

(pause)

I could see Kanta getting a bit impatient and wanting to get the meeting started. She came to me and said, *'Didi, shall we start, if it gets too late the farmers won't stay.'* I asked

her to get started with what we had planned for the meeting. Kanta started the meeting by introducing herself and sharing the key points of discussion for the day. She had also set up her PICO projector to share the latest video about a new sowing technique we had learnt in our last training.

(pause)

Kanta continued to share the new technique with the farmers. I observed that she did the same mistake I did when we had our donors visit us some time back. She was in a hurry to finish what she had prepared for. I looked at the farmers for their reaction. Some of them looked lost, some were bored, and some were distracted. I realised that no one was following what Kanta was saying. Kanta looked more nervous now that she was not getting any positive reactions from the farmers. She looked at me desperately for help. I smiled at her and gestured to come sit next to me.

(pause)

I said, *"Kanta has shared a very important topic today, we will talk about it in sometime. Let me ask you this first: How was your harvest last season?"* Many of the farmers shared their points. Some of them said that the last few meetings by their CRP Shanta, helped them try a few new techniques. Some of them said that the new techniques were hard to try, and they were not able to see too much difference.

(pause)

I listened carefully; I made some notes in my book. I asked them some more follow-up questions to understand why a technique didn't work or what they did that helped them have better harvests. By this time there was a lot of energy in the group, and everyone was talking. Some of them who had some problems, I told them that we will talk about it when we come to visit them later in the month. I finally asked them if they were able to understand the new sowing technique that Kanta was talking about.

(pause)

There was silence and everyone was looking at each other. One or two of them said, *"It is something about a sowing technique?"* I asked Kanta to explain again, but to do it step by step and pause to ask any questions after every step. Kanta tried again. She shared the new technique step by step and paused after every step. Some of them had questions which were answered right there. This way, Kanta shared the full technique and then showed them a video created by our video team.

(pause)

We then spent about 15 mins trying to answer all the questions that the farmers had. Some were excited to try right away. We told them that we will come to their farm to help them apply this new technique. As the farmers were leaving, I spent some time talking to each of them, asking about their health, their family members and also about their farming practices.

(pause)

Once we left the ground, Kanta said, *"Didi, thank you so much, you saved today's meeting. I don't know what was going on. They were not able to understand anything I was saying. Also, they are so connected to Shanta didi, I don't know if I can ever become a good CRP for*

them.” I smiled, knowing very well that all of us have had these doubts when we start, and we all feel like we can’t manage this job.

(pause)

“Kanta, this is your first meeting, you did better than what I did when I started or maybe even better than what Shanta did. Don’t be so hard on yourself. We all started off like this and we are here today because of the time we spent doing these meetings and interacting with the farmers. After every meeting you will get better. Let me ask you this. What did you observe me do in the meeting today? Why do you think they were able to understand what we wanted to tell them?” I said.

She thought for a bit, and she said, *“You asked them questions Didi. They were responding to everything you asked.”* *“What else did you see?”* I said. *“They were laughing and talking to you, like they knew you for a long time. When I went to the school, no one was talking to me. They were all talking amongst themselves. I was standing on the other side and hoping they would talk to me also.”*

(pause)

I said, *“Very good observations Kanta. Yes, you are right. You reminded me of a conversation I had with Naveen Bhaiya long time ago, when I was a new CRP. He told me to try and make every conversation with the farmers a two-way conversation by listening, asking questions and engaging with them rather than make it a one-way conversation. One-way conversation will only help you communicate your message but a two-way conversation, will help you understand what they are thinking, what concerns they have, and if they understood what you are trying to tell them. For you to do all of this, you need to first engage with them and work on gaining their trust. Did you notice I spent the first 15 mins just talking to them and asking them about their family, children and their farming?”* Kanta was nodding her head. *“This is a part of how you engage with them. Spend time getting to know them, their background, their family. This will help you stay connected with them and build a relationship. Slowly you will earn their trust also. This will take time. Don’t expect for it to happen in a day or a month. It will take its own time. You have to keep working on it Kanta.”*

(pause)

I told Kanta not to worry too much and I would help her as we go along. She seemed a bit confused but that’s how all of us were when we started, isn’t it? Do you have any other ideas/ ways of engaging with your community/ farmers? Please write to me, I would love to know.

Ok, I have to go now. I have to help Kanta with creating some documentation for her work. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri



Reflection questions after Letter 13

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of engaging with the community of farmers from her letter?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) How do you practice the skill of engaging and making it a two-way conversation with the community?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Make it a two-way engaging conversation with the farmers by listening, asking questions and hearing their point of view
- 2) Connect with the community at a personal level. Take the time and effort to know about their family, interests and ask after them
- 3) Build a relationship with each of the farmers in the group/ community
- 4) Share your life stories and experiences so they get to know you as a person

Letter 14 – Track and Monitor performance of CRPs

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am so glad that the COVID-19 lockdowns have all reduced drastically and I can go visit my CRPs again in their villages. It was getting a bit difficult for me to do everything on the phone. Now, I can do some work on the phone and visit at least two times a month. It has come as a big relief to me. How has your working style/ life changed because of COVID? Are you trying anything new to manage your work? Do write to me, I would love to hear more about it.

(pause)

I have some very good news to share with you my dear friends. It came as a real surprise to me, but I was really happy with it. Today, we had our annual program meet in our district office. This is the day when everyone comes together – we have all the CRPs, all the cluster coordinators, all the district team members as well as the senior leaders of the organization that meet. It is mostly to share updates on what has happened and there are some awards that are given out based on the performance of the previous year. It is also a day of fun and food after all our hard work during the year.

(pause)

The reason why I am so happy today is that my team has won the ‘Team of the year’ award. Based on our performance against our targets for the whole year, the management committee announces one team that is like the best performing team. This year, due to God’s grace, our team has been nominated the best performing team for the year. I did not expect this at all. All the CRPs were so happy, we literally had tears of joy in our eyes. It was such a proud feeling to walk up to the stage with my entire team and receive an award from the Head of our organization. I am truly blessed to have a team like this.

(pause)

Once we got the award, we had two people from the district team who came up to us and said they wanted to make a video about our team and what we did to win this award. I almost panicked at that time. I had no idea what we will say, what we had done that would be different from other teams. To my surprise, my CRPs said, *‘yes, we can do the video and we will tell you more about our team.’* I must admit, I was very nervous, I had no idea what they would say and how it would come out. The video was supposed to be played in the evening for everyone to see. My CRPs said, *‘Don’t worry Sahuri Didi, it will all be fine’*.

(pause)

The team set up their camera and asked us to come one by one to record a short clip for about a minute. They called me first. I went in and spoke about all the things that I have done with the team. These are not new to you; I have shared them in my previous letters to you. I spoke about the feedback sharing, my CRP book, praising in public etc. etc. I felt like it was not much and maybe we just won the award by sheer luck and coincidence.

(pause)

The whole day went by really quickly. There were lots of activities, lots of fun, lots of updates that were shared. I didn't even realise that the day was coming to an end. I suddenly had this sinking feeling that they would show the video about the team. What if they found out that we hadn't done anything significant and took the award away? I would be so disappointed and upset. My team also would be so sad.

(pause)

It was time to show the video. My heart was beating so fast, I thought I will faint. The video started with some of our Bhaiyas from the district team talking about my team and the kind of experiences they had while they worked with my team. Then they played my clip where I said I was happy and blessed to have this team. After that, one by one my CRPs were speaking in the video. I was truly shocked at the different kinds of things they said about what helped them perform better.

(pause)

You remember Meera? Meera said that she was able to perform better because at the beginning of every month, we were able to break down the monthly target into weekly target. This helped her feel less overwhelmed and she focused on finishing one week's target at a time. If one of the weeks she could not complete the target, then she knew that the next week she had to work extra hard. She thanked me to help her create weekly plans and monthly plans because of which she felt she could manage her time and performance better.

(pause)

Durga said that the weekly catch up meetings that she did with me, with the help of the CRP book was very useful. It helped her understand on a weekly basis, what she did well and what she needed to do. This way, she planned better for the next week. She also said that I was able to give her feedback that was clear and easy to implement. Durga also mentioned that she liked the fact that I praised her in front of the block team or district team or even the farmers sometimes. This made her more confident and motivated her.

(pause)

Kanta said that she was new and still learning how to do the job. She also mentioned that we did a 10 min call every morning in the first two months of her joining the organization. In those 10 mins, we discussed the priorities of the day and update from the previous day. Through these daily conversations, she got clarity on what needs to be done for that particular day. After two months, based on Kanta's comfort, we slowly reduced the frequency of the call. Kanta mentioned that the calls really helped her when she was lost on what to do.

(pause)

The entire group was clapping once the video was over. We were all so happy to receive this award. Many people came up to me and my team and congratulated us for this great achievement. I had so many challenges with helping my CRPs come to this stage, it was all worth it.

(pause)

When I got home, I was telling my children about the day I had and the award we won. I was so overwhelmed listening to all my CRPs share what helped them perform better. I

had never thought that such small things that I did was making such a big difference to them. These are all simple practices I learnt from my supervisor, Jagruti Didi when I was a CRP. I just follow them religiously till the time that the CRP can manage on their own. Being in touch with the team, helping them plan their day, their week and even their month is really important. Once they have a plan, it is important to monitor it and ensure they don't have any roadblocks while trying to achieve that plan. Simple calls/ conversations daily can take us a long way.

(pause)

I was so excited today that I thought I should write to you about it right away. Do you agree with what I said? Do you think it helps our CRPs when we keep track of their performance and keep pushing them in the right direction? Do you have any other ways to do this? Please do share with me, I will be very happy to learn from you.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I better go to bed, otherwise I will not be able to wake up on time tomorrow. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 14

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of tracking and monitoring the CRPs?

- 5) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 6) How do you practice the skill of tracking and monitoring performance of your CRPs?

- 7) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Simple things go a long way. Identify what works for your CRP and do it religiously
- 2) Help your CRPs plan either on a daily, weekly or monthly basis based on their need and experience
- 3) As the CRPs get more experience and exposure, you do not have to handhold them so much. When CRPs are new, you have to handhold them a lot more
- 4) Helping CRPs keep track of what they are doing, sharing feedback on a monthly basis is very important for their growth and development

Letter 15 – Being a Role Model for the CRPs

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am doing very well. Everything at work is going on well, my children are back at school as they have opened up now. My mother in law's health is better, so I can't complain. I hope everything on your end is also going well.

(pause)

Do you remember Rathna, one of the *Krishi Mitrs* who joined a few months ago. I must tell you that she is learning on the job really well and I can see that she has great potential. We both get along really well and discuss our challenges, issues and even joys of working with each other. It is so important to have good companions in our journey, don't you think? I am happy that we get along really well.

(pause)

Last week Naveen Bhaiya had come to our block. He spent the whole day talking to us, updating us on what's new in the program and also taking our ideas on what needs to be done better. As we were brainstorming and discussing, Rathna came up with an idea. Her idea was based on the function we had last month and the award that my team won. Rathna said, '*Naveen bhaiya, why don't we all learn from each other on how to do our job better. We have so many examples of great Krishi Mitrs in our block itself. Why can't we buddy up with each other and learn from each other? Look at Sahuri for example, she won the 'team of the year' award. I am sure she has many ideas and suggestions she can share with each of us to do better. I am inspired by her, and I want to work as hard as her to see if my team gets qualified for the award next year.*'

(pause)

Some of the other *Krishi Mitrs* also said they would like to try the buddy system. So, Naveen bhaiya asked us to pilot it in our block first. We spent a few minutes after that brainstorming on what we should do, how we will go about it and who will be responsible. We were asked to buddy up as well. Goes without saying that Rathna and I paired up for the first round of buddy exchange. Rathna was very excited, she was screaming with joy when Naveen Bhaiya said we could be a pair.

(pause)

The first task we were asked to do was to shadow our buddy for one day in the week. Which means, I was supposed to go with Rathna to whatever meetings or interactions she had planned for the day and observe her, learn from her and share feedback. Rathna would do the same on one other day of the week. This way we both got a chance to learn and to share feedback with each other.

(pause)

I was also really excited about it. Rarely do we get an opportunity to learn something new or experience something different. I always grab these kinds of opportunities. You never know what you can learn and apply in life. Rathna and I decided that two days later I will shadow Rathna and the next week one of the days, she will shadow me on the field.

(pause)

Finally, the first day of the buddy shadow program was here. I got to our block office and met Rathna there. We were all set to leave, and she looked at me and said, '*Sahuri, I am so nervous. I am new at this job, and you have been doing it for so long. I don't know what you will think of me and how today will go.*' I told her not to worry and it would be a learning experience for me to see someone else do the same job in their style. On that note, we headed to the first village we were supposed to visit.

(pause)

As we reached the first village, one of her CRPs was waiting for us. Her name is Uma. She is a very nice and hardworking girl. I have seen her in all the meetings. While she doesn't speak much, she shares some good ideas when asked for it. Uma had scheduled a video dissemination session with one of the farmer groups. We went in and all the farmers were happy to meet Rathna. I just sat in one corner observing, I did not want to participate much in the meeting.

(pause)

Uma did a good job in sharing the information with the farmers. One thing I noticed though was that she was interrupting the farmers a lot. Every time they wanted to say something or ask a question, she would interrupt and say, '*yes, I have understood what you want to ask*' or '*you will get time in the end to ask questions, for now just listen.*' While the meeting went well, I thought that it could have been so much better if the farmers also got an opportunity to share their point of view and it was more two way.

(pause)

Once we finished the meeting, all the farmers left. It was just Rathna, Uma and me. Rathna was talking to Uma about all the other things that she needed to complete, and I noticed that Rathna was also doing the same thing. She kept interrupting Uma every time she had a point to share. It seemed like this conversation was very one sided. I could imagine this conversation being on the phone. It would have been very frustrating for Uma.

(pause)

We spent the morning half in Uma's GP meeting a few farmers and visiting a few people. I saw that as a trend for both Uma and Rathna. They never let the other person finish, would always interrupt them. During lunch, Rathna asked me what she thought of Uma's meeting and her interactions. I told Rathna that I saw her interrupt others when she was sharing some information. She should avoid that, so the other person also gets a change to share their point of view. Rathna said she will talk to Uma and give her this feedback.

(pause)

We then headed to the next village where Bindu was waiting for us. I noticed the same pattern with her as well. She was interrupting others and not letting them finish. Rathna caught on to this feedback quickly and told Bindu that she was interrupting and should avoid doing that. When Bindu wanted to share her points, Rathna interrupted her and cut her off. At that time, I realised that this was a bigger problem that I need to address. I was just hoping that Rathna would take it positively.

(pause)

After a long day on the field, both of us came to the block office. We sat down to have tea outside and Rathna asked me, 'Sahuri, how was your experience of being my shadow. What did you observe? I am very keen to hear your feedback and I am nervous as well.' I said, 'You don't have to be nervous Rathna, it is a learning process for me as much as it is for you. I really had a good day with you and your team. I could see that the farmers are all benefiting a lot from all your expertise. You and your team have very good technical knowledge. You are experts in the field, you know how to answer any technical questions that come your way. This is a very good place to be in. You should be proud of that.'

(pause)

'I do have some feedback for you Rathna on what you can do better. Remember I told you that Uma was interrupting others when they were speaking? I noticed the same thing with Bindu as well. You also noticed it and shared your feedback with her. But the more important part is, I noticed it with you as well. I noticed that you were also interrupting the farmers or your CRPs when they wanted to share something. This happened many times. If it was once or twice, it was fine, but I noticed it with at least 7-8 times today. You know when Deepu, my son was young, he would imitate everything I did. How I ate, how I sat, how I washed my hand, how I would laugh. I found it very cute at that time, but I realised that he was also imitating something that was not correct. Like I had this habit of biting my nails, and he would imitate me. That's when I understood that he doesn't understand the difference between right or wrong, he is doing it because someone who he is looking up to is doing it and therefore he thinks it is ok to do it.'

(pause)

'It is the same case with our CRPs. They may not have worked in the past, they don't know how to have these interactions. They see us and learn. If we do something right, they follow us, if we do something wrong, they will follow us. They may think, this is how it is supposed to be done. It is so important for us to demonstrate the right behaviours that we want them to also demonstrate. Unless we do it, we role model it for them, they will not be able to understand how to do it or even the importance of it. It is better to show them rather than to tell them. What do you think?'

(pause)

Rathna was looking at me intently for some time. She then said, 'Sahuri, I really had no idea I was interrupting people. I agree sometimes I get impatient and want to complete something so I may interrupt to hurry them, but I did not know it was so obvious and it was happening so many times. You are right, maybe my CRPs have also learnt it from me. During training etc., they tell us not to interrupt, to listen to the farmers. I have been repeating the message without following it myself. This may have led the CRPs to believe it is ok to do it.'

(pause)

'This is so valuable Sahuri. No one has given me this feedback before. I have to practice what I tell others first, only then they will understand and follow. I have to be a role model and demonstrate all the right behaviours. That is how the team will learn, by watching or observing', she said. 'Absolutely Rathna. This is exactly what I was saying. You understood it so quickly and so willingly accepted this feedback. So proud of you.' We both were really happy that we were able to add value to each other and be open about what we think about each other.

(pause)

I have to admit, I was a bit nervous about how Rathna would take this feedback, but she was very sporting about it. I guess it helped that we are also good friends, and we can talk about many things to each other. I truly believe that if you believe something, you demonstrate it first, others will learn by watching and observing you. Do you agree with me? Do you have any other thoughts? Do write to me, I am keen to hear what you think.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. It has been a long day. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 15

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of observing and sharing feedback with Rathna?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) Do you think being a role model and inspiring your team is important? If yes, how does it help? If no, why?
- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Do what you say and say what you do
- 2) Practice before you preach or tell others what to do
- 3) Be kind and inspire others who look up to you to do better
- 4) Be open and honest in your communication and feedback with others, even if it is your peers.

Letter 16 – Inspiring and Motivating CRPs to think long term

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am doing very well. We are already in 2022! Can't believe it has been more than one year that I am writing letters to you. Writing to you has helped me so much. I am able to reflect on myself and draw learnings and conclusions on what I am able to do well and not so well. I am also trying to learn typing so I can write more letters.

(pause)

Are you able to think about what you have learnt in the last one year? So much has changed in the last 2 years, how have you been able to adapt to these changes? What have you done differently in the last year? Do write to me and I would love to hear your thoughts.

(pause)

Do you remember my CRP Shanta? She is the one who got pregnant last year, and her mother-in-law forced her to quit the job. I felt so helpless at that time for not being able to do anything about it. Luckily for me, her sister, Kanta got married into the same household and she continued her work as the CRP. If you remember, Shanta is really smart, and she was able to do a lot of work on her own. She was my top CRP, and I had a lot of hopes that she will someday become an 'agripreneur'.

(pause)

After Shanta left, I was determined to stay in touch with her and help her with anything she needed. I was certain she would come back and resume her work once the baby was a little older. I was getting an update about her periodically from her sister, Kanta. I also got to meet her a few times when I went to the village to meet Kanta. I used every opportunity to help her visualise her future.

(pause)

The last few times when I met or spoke to Shanta, she seemed a bit tired and unhappy with how things had turned out for her. She was not able to accept the fact that she had to give up her job in order to start a family. Last year was a particularly tough year for them as a family. Her father-in-law passed away very suddenly, her mother-in-law fell sick and the whole household responsibility was on Shanta. To top it all, her first two trimesters of pregnancy was really tough for her. They also struggled financially to meet their expenses due to all the challenges they faced. Luckily her sister was married into the same household, and she took on the role of a CRP which helped with the family expenses.

(pause)

Shanta would call me once in a month to speak about what was going on in her life and to get some advice from me. All along I would advise her to focus on her health and her baby's health. All problems that she was facing at home would pass and things would get better. I asked her to stay strong and take care of her mother-in-law like she would take care of her own mother.

(pause)

Last week, I went to visit Kanta as she had some important sangha meetings that she had scheduled. After we finished all our work, I was about to leave. Kanta insisted that I went home with her and had a cup of tea at least. She didn't listen to any excuse and was very keen for me to go to her house. So, I went. I was a bit worried to face her mother-in-law after our debate last year, but I thought, I should go see them considering they had gone through a very tough time during COVID last year.

(pause)

When I reached Kanta's house, her mother-in-law was sitting outside her house and staring into space. She seems to have lost a lot of weight and aged quite a bit in one year, I thought to myself. I went up to her and said, '*Namaste Amma. How are you? I am so sorry about your husband. I will pray for his soul to rest in peace.*' At first, she didn't recognise me, Kanta then explained who I was. She asked me to sit down and called for a cup of tea for me. She spent some time telling me about the harrowing time they had last year with all the illness and death in the family. I felt really bad to hear all of this. So many people have gone through really tough times during COVID.

(pause)

I met Shanta as well. She also seemed to have lost weight and looked tired. Her daughter is about 3 months old now and she looks just like Shanta. The load of taking care of the house and the baby seems to have taken a toll on Shanta. We chatted for some time till I had tea.

(pause)

Amma ji then asked me, '*Beta how long have you been working and how do you manage to do this work? Do you have children?*' I said, '*Yes Ammaji, I have two children. They are both well and they go to school. I have been working since the time I got married. It has been about 15 years. There are two reasons why I have been able to work for so long and stand on my own feet. One is my guruji, Jagruti Didi. When I started working, she was one of the Krishi Mitrs. She guided me, helped me learn and grow, she taught me how to dream, how to take charge of my life and stand on my own feet. Today I can tell you that I don't have to ask anyone if I need any money to buy something for myself. In fact, I can comfortably take care of my expenses, my children's expenses and contribute to the house also. Without her, I would not have reached so far. The other person is my mother-in-law. She has supported me and encouraged me to go out and work. When I have to travel, or if I go home late, she is always there to take care of the children and help me with the housework. Without her support and understanding, I would have not been able to do this.*'

(pause)

'Amma ji, this is not just a job for us. It is a lot more. It is something that gives us some independence, freedom, people respect us and the work we do. When I go to the villages, the farmers are happy with the help and support I am able to give, there is some credibility I have been able to build. It has given me the confidence that I can take care of myself and my children if something goes wrong or if there is a crisis in the family. This is really important for us as women, don't you think? Gone are the times that women are only meant to manage the house and raise children. They can do so much more. Yes, there will be



challenges, there will be problems, but we can't sit at home because someone said something about us or our work.'

(pause)

Amma ji was nodding, and Shanta had tears in her eyes. Shanta turned around to her mother-in-law and said, *'Amma ji, I really want to do this. I want to be like Sahuri didi and all the other didis we have. I want to stand on my own feet and do something which makes me proud, and which will make you proud. The last one year being at home has driven me crazy. I end up doing housework all day. When I went to work, I used to be fast and finish all the housework in a few hours. Moreover, you are here to help me and guide me when I need it. I really want to work Amma ji'*, she started crying. We all had tears in our eyes, including Amma ji.

(pause)

Finally, Amma ji spoke, *'Yes beti, I have been harsh by trying to do what my mother-in-law did to me or what I know is the norm. But I didn't realise that it is me who can change this tradition, otherwise, you will end up like me in your old age. I didn't have any opportunity at that time, neither did I have any guidance. Now the world is changing, you also need to change with the world. You have people like Sahuri who have done it in the past and prove that you can be working and take care of your home and family. Once munnii grows up a little bit and starts eating solid food, you can go back to doing your work. I will manage her when you are not there. I don't want to regret stopping you from following your dreams beti.'*

(pause)

We were all so happy to hear Amma ji's words. Shanta burst out in tears and came and hugged me. She thanked me for not giving up on her. I left for home as this family was flooded with emotions and joy. As I was heading home, I couldn't help but think that we have come such a long way in 1 year. Last year Amma ji was not even ready to listen to me or consider my points. Today, she is willing and asking her daughters-in-law to do something more in life. We have to be patient and keep trying, never give up. Change doesn't happen overnight, it takes time. It is like drip irrigation; we need to keep making changes little by little and the outcomes will be wonderful.

(pause)

I was waiting to write to you to give you an update about Shanta and I can't stop smiling as I am writing this letter. What did you think of my approach? Would you have done anything different? Write to me and let me know. I would love to hear from you.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I will go help my mother-in-law with making rotis. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 16

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of trying to convince Shanta's mother-in-law?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) Do you think it is important to show our CRPs a vision of how their life maybe? If yes, how? If no, why?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) It is important to be independent and stand on your own feet in today's world
- 2) Being a CRP is a start, it is not only a job, but they can also go a long way if they put their heart and mind to it
- 3) As Field coordinators, it is our job to help the CRPs see this vision. It is also our job to help their families, community and society see the benefits of women being more empowered
- 4) Never give up, keep trying, be patient and persistent.

Letter 17 – Influencing the Farmers

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Hope you had a good festive season and enjoyed this time with your family. I also had a good time. After a long time, I had my elder sister, Chandra along with her family come visit me. We spent a lot of time talking about our childhood and reliving those times. I wish we could meet more often in the next coming years.

(pause)

Chandra lives in the neighbouring district along with her husband and two children. She is about 4 years older than me and got married at a slightly younger age. While she is still young, both her children are grown up and are fairly independent. She has a lot of time on her hands and usually gets bored in the afternoons at home. She has YouTube on her phone, so she spends all the time watching some video around cooking or gardening. She implements some of those and tests it on us. Last week she made a mooli dish that no one was ready to touch. We all had a good laugh at her expense.

(pause)

Ali Bhaiya had told me a few months back that our organization was growing, and we were going to expand in many other districts. One of the districts that we were planning to start our work in, was Chandra's district. I thought it will be a great opportunity for her to get a job as a CRP for her village. She has time on her hands, and I was sure my jeejaji would not mind as well. She can use her spare time to make some money and contribute to the household, considering the children are growing up and soon they will need to go to college to the city nearby.

(pause)

I also knew that she may refuse if I suggested this idea by saying 'she is shy or doesn't know anything about farming'. So, I decided to try another approach with her. I had a week's time before they went back to their village. One evening as we were drinking tea in the aangan of our house, I told Chandra that I had to go meet a few farmers over the next few days for an hour each day. I asked her if she would like to come along with me. Initially she said, no, but somehow, I convinced her that I wanted to show her a few nice temples and places around our village.

(pause)

The next morning after breakfast, the two of us set out to meet some of the farmers. As we were walking around the village, a lot of farmers stopped to talk to me for a few minutes. They were telling me about their harvest and the rains that they had in the last few months. Chandra said, '*Sahuri, you are very popular. Lot of people know you and are stopping to talk to you.*' I said, '*Yes Didi it is because of my job. I get to interact with all these farmers and in a small way help them, so they are able to get better harvests and earn a bit more.*'

(pause)



As we walked by the fields, I saw one field had a macchan for lauki. I also saw a few red insects that were eating up the flowers and the leaves. I thought I will go talk to the farmer and see how to help them overcome this problem. I recognised the farmer sitting under a tree. He was an old chacha from our village and he loved to disagree with everything anyone in the village had to say. I was not sure if he would listen to me. I hoped that Chandra would not get disappointed by this experience.

(pause)

I walked up to him and said, *'Chacha, how are you doing? Have you had breakfast?'* He just looked at me and continued smoking his beedi. *'What do you want?'* he asked. *'Chacha I was passing by, and I saw your macchan. When I looked closer there are red insects that are on many plants and they are eating up the flowers and the leaves of the lauki plant,'* I said. He said, *'So, they are insects, if they don't eat plants what else will they eat? Let them eat, they also have to live on something.'*

(pause)

'Yes, Chacha what you are saying is right, but these red insects will multiple really fast and start spreading. Once they spread, it will ruin your crop and the plants will die. You will not get a good produce that you are hoping for.' I said. *'Beta, you know how old I am? I am your father's age and I have been farming from before you were born. I have seen so many harvests and so many insects. These few insects are not going to be able to do anything. In fact, insects are good for the farm, that's what my grandfather used to say. You don't worry about it much and go home. I am sure your children are hungry, and you need to prepare lunch for them'.* I looked at Chandra and she was getting really scared. She was gesturing me to keep quiet and to say let's go from here.

(pause)

I smiled at him and said, *'Chacha, yes, your grandfather was right. In his time, things were different don't you think? The air we breathed was cleaner, the products we used didn't have so many chemicals, even the insects and worms we had, there was a purpose. It would make the soil more fertile. Now things are different, there is more pollution, insects are mutating all the time, viruses are also changing and getting stronger, things keep changing and we need to change accordingly, right? We can no longer afford to say, we did this earlier, and it worked. We have to continuously think about what will work today and help us tomorrow. Let's look at the red insects for instance. Now it is there on a few plants. Tomorrow, it will lay eggs and most of it will fall on the ground. Slowly the soil will get impacted, along with the plant dying because of these insects. If you don't take care of these things now, it will have an impact on your tomorrow. Now summer will start, and these insects will only multiply at a faster rate.'*

(pause)

He was listening intently. Chandra had her mouth open and was staring at me. I said, *'The choice is yours Chacha, you do something small and simple today or you wait for some time to see if these red insects create any nuisance for you and the crop.'* Chacha said, *'I know what you will tell me. You will ask me to go get some expensive fertilizers and spray it. Do you think I have that kind of money?'* *'Chacha, not every solution requires money and expensive fertilisers. You can make a simple liquid solution made out of neem seeds and spray it on the plants. Spray it for a couple of days and you will see the insects disappearing. You might have some neem seeds at home?'* He nodded his head.

(pause)

'Why don't you try it on one part of your macchan Chacha and you see the impact for yourself. If it works, great, if it doesn't, you can stop doing it. You have nothing to lose anyway. What do you say?' I said. Chacha asked me a few more questions. Luckily, I had a video we had made for CRPs and farmers. I showed him the video. He said he will think about it. As I was about to leave, he said, *'Beta, what is your name? Can you save your number in my mobile?'* I will call you in case this doesn't work.' I saved my number on his phone and said goodbye to him. Chandra and I started walking back home.

(pause)

Chandra was silent for a long time. I asked her what happened. She said, *'Sahuri, how nicely you convinced that Chacha to try this solution. I thought he was going to ask both of us to leave. I was very scared.'* I said, *'Didi, all these farmers are so many years older than us. They have been farming as long as we have been alive, exactly like he said. It does not mean what they are doing is wrong. It means that they don't know another way of doing it. They have learnt from their fathers and grandfathers. We have to help them understand that many things have changed since then. There are new methods and new technologies that are available now. We can do a lot more with the same amount of effort. One needs to know how to do it, that's all.'* *'But Sahuri, how do you know so much about all this. When you were small, you didn't go to the field so much with Baba?'*, Chandra asked. *'Didi, we have a team of experts who are called Subject Matter Specialist. They have studied this topic for many years. They train us and we ask them any doubts we have. They are always there to help us with anything technically. Once you resolve an issue a few times, you will know how to do it.'* I said.

(pause)

She was nodding. *'It is not so difficult Didi. It needs some learning and some patience to work with the farmers. If we understand where they come from and make our intent of wanting to help them very clear, they will always reach out to ask for support.'* I could sense that Chandra was thinking about it deeply. I let her be the whole day. She kept asking me questions throughout the day around situations I may face while dealing with the farmers. I explained whatever I could with fair amount of detail.

(pause)

We spent 4 days going to different fields and talking to the farmers. On the last day, as we were having tea in our aangan, I asked Chandra, *'Didi, our NGO is going to start in your district as well. They will be very soon looking for people to talk to farmers and help them, just like what I have been doing over the last week. Why don't you try for this role? You have some time, and this will help you earn some money also. It will give you so much satisfaction for helping the farmers. Yes, it will be difficult at the beginning, but you will get all the help and support from your team. And I am always there to help you.'*

(pause)

Chandra looked very excited. She said she will think about it and talk to her husband about it. I was happy that she seemed positive about this opportunity. I only hope she talks to her husband and finds a way to be a part of it. I will keep talking to her over the next few months till she decides if she wants to go ahead or no. I really hope she does.

(pause)



Ok, I have to go now. Chandra is leaving today, and we have to make a lot of namkeens for her to take back. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 17

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of trying to convince the farmer?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) Do you think it is important to understand the farmer's point of view and help them understand new techniques they can use? If yes, why?
- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Understand the farmer's point of view and where the resistance is coming from
- 2) Use your technical knowledge and information to share facts, data to help them understand your point
- 3) Use visual aids/ videos to help you with sharing accurate technical information
- 4) Be patient. Listen to the farmers, ask them questions. It may not happen in one meeting, so follow up if required.

Letter 18 – Continuous Learning Process

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am also doing well. I have been really busy last few weeks because of the season. There are lots of training programs going on for CRPs, some government schemes have been implemented, so lot of new things to do and learn. I don't know about you, but when I have to do something new, I get really excited, nervous but more excited. Do you feel the same? Write to me about it in your next letter.

(pause)

Do you remember my daughter Anita? She has grown into a beautiful adolescent girl, so mature, so grown up. She has been learning so much in her school and in other programs. Anita also helps me and my mother-in-law with making dinner after she finishes her homework. I suddenly feel like she has grown up so much. It just seems like yesterday she was born. Time flies so fast.

(pause)

Anita has been a part of an adolescent girls' program for the last one year. One of the NGOs was running this program and I encouraged her to join. All these changes I am able to see in the last one year and I think it is because of this program for adolescent girls. Last year, because of COVID, they were not able to meet and do the training face to face. They started doing these trainings online. They gave Anita a lovely tab. I didn't know what a tab was till I saw it. It is like a phone but bigger, like a laptop but smaller. Apparently, it is called tablet and the children call it 'tab'.

(pause)

When she got the tablet, she was glued to it and didn't let anyone touch it. But after a few days, we all ended up using it. Deepu uses it to play games, which I am not happy about, but I allow it sometimes. Anita uses it anyway for her online training weekly. I also started using it. I had seen Chandra use YouTube, so I started watching some videos as well. Initially I was scared to touch it, what if I dropped it or spoiled it. Slowly Anita encouraged me and also taught me how to use it. She has become really good at it, and she learnt so quickly!

(pause)

In the last 6-7 months, I started practicing typing on the tab. Remember I told you about it? I now type all the letters instead of writing. This way, even if I make a mistake, I don't have to scratch out anything and it doesn't look messy. Once I started typing, I really enjoyed it. I liked how the words were forming on the screen. I could delete it, I could make it big, it was so fascinating to see all of it. In a few weeks, I got comfortable with typing.

(pause)

One of the days when I went to office, Ali Bhaiya was trying to type out some data from many sheets into his computer. I told Ali Bhaiya that I could help him with typing it in the computer as I was practicing. He was very happy with this suggestion and asked me to

take a seat at the computer. He kept dictating and I kept typing. We completed the task in half the time it would have taken Ali Bhaiya. He thanked me profusely. After that day, whenever there was some data entry to do, or capture information into some formats, Ali Bhaiya would ask me to do it. Slowly, I started to learn a lot more on the computer. From only typing, I moved to data entry and to update small report formats.

(pause)

I really enjoyed working in front of the computer for one or two days during the week. Ali Bhaiya took it upon himself to teach me a few things so I could pick up computer skills. He also gave me some tasks to do when he didn't have time. Slowly I started doing small tasks on word and excel sheet. I must admit that I made a lot of mistakes. Sometimes, we sent the file to the district office, and they pointed out a few mistakes. When they got to know that I had created that document, they didn't shout at me or anything. In fact, they appreciated the fact that I was learning something new.

(pause)

As I started to learn new things, I started to get more confident and less worried that I will spoil the computer. It has also happened a few times that the computer has suddenly stopped working. Initially I thought it was my fault, but Ali Bhaiya asked me to just wait till it starts working and not click any buttons. After a few minutes, it would start working or he would restart the computer. On a few days, I would go back home and check how to do a few things on YouTube on Anita's tab. She also joined me in watching these videos and she would explain things to me when I did not understand.

(pause)

A few months ago, Anita created a Facebook account for me. I had no idea how to use it, but she insisted that it will be good. We added a few friends on my account. Of course, the first one was Chandra and she had so many videos uploaded on her account. I got some recommendations to add people from the district team and other block teams, so I added all of them. I could see the work they were doing on the field with some photos and videos. It was very exciting to see so much information online. Ali Bhaiya had already told me to be careful and use Facebook in a limited manner till I got used to it. So, I was very conscious of that. Now I use it for 10-15 mins in a day, not more. I mostly check all the updates of other Krishi Mitrs in other blocks or of our district team.

(pause)

Well not everything is *Kushal mangal* when you learn something new. I remember the first month that I started working on the computer, I deleted a very important file. Ali Bhaiya was furious. He spent all day trying to figure out how to get it back. Somehow the district team had a copy of the file and they sent it to Ali Bhaiya. For a few days, I could not even face him. I was so upset, I even cried myself to sleep. I almost gave up and thought I will never touch the computer again. Ali Bhaiya noticed me being upset and told me that this is all a part of learning something new. Unless you make mistakes, the learning does not remain with you for life. He told me how he sent out his wedding photo by mistake on his email when he was trying to send out a photo from one of the fields. He asked me to be careful going forward and never to give up.

(pause)

Taking inspiration from that, I slowly built back my confidence in working on the computer. I was reminded that every task/ job has been tough in the beginning, but we have all learnt it and moved on. I remember when I became a CRP. After a month I was ready to give up, but Jagriti didi spoke to me and helped me move past this feeling. Every time I had tried to give up on something, there is always someone who shows me direction and gives me hope not to give up. I take that seriously and move forward.

(pause)

I have a big task ahead of me now. Ali Bhaiya has made me in charge of creating an update for the monthly review that happens in the Head Office with all the leaders. It is going to be a presentation and I am really nervous about how to do it. I have 3 weeks to plan and do it. I just hope I do a decent job and Ali Bhaiya doesn't have to redo the whole thing again. Every evening, Anita is helping me learn new things about presentations on YouTube. Ali Bhaiya recently attended a training program on presentation skills. He said he will train me as well.

(pause)

My dear friends, have you learnt something new in the last few months? How did you feel about it? Did you give up or did you continue? Write to me about it, would love to hear your experience and what you have done. Wish me luck for my monthly review presentation for next month. I hope I am able to do a decent job with it. Will write to you and let you know how it goes.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I am going to watch some YouTube videos on how to make presentations. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri



Reflection questions after Letter 18

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of trying to learn something new?

2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

3) Do you think it is important to keep learning new things? Do you think it is important to not give up after some time? If yes, why? If no, why?

4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Ensure you learn something new all the time. Keep finding ways to upgrade yourself and learn new things that will help your job and help you grow
- 2) Learning something new is always difficult, it will get better with time. Don't give up halfway
- 3) Take help from as many people as you know, including your children and family members
- 4) Set small goals for yourself to achieve/ learn



People's Action for National Integration - PANI

Sahuri Letters – Set 4

Field Coordinator Capacity Building Program
Program Swera
April 2022

Sahuri Letters – Set 4

Broad Guidelines to implement these letters:

- Building Credibility for your organization
- Letting go and trusting your team

Month 10

- Influencing Stakeholders
- Aspiring to grow in the organization

Month 11

- Motivating CRPs to think long term
- Importance of being an agri-preneur

Month 12

1) Preparation:

- Attend the briefing session conducted by Phicus. After the session, facilitators will practice reading the letters aloud a few times to understand the context and the flow. Anticipate any questions that may come from the Field Coordinators and prepare for the same
- Increase your understanding about the topic, which enables you to answer any questions that come your way
- Liaise with the Block Coordinator to fix up a time when all the Field Coordinators are available. You will need 1 hour for this session

2) Implementation:

- Get all the Field Coordinators to sit in a circle and create a friendly environment
- Tell them that you have received a letter that is addressed to them. This letter is from Sahuri, and you have been requested to read out this letter
- Request them to make a note of any questions that comes to their mind. Let them allow you to read the whole letter before asking any questions
- Read the letter out loudly with the correct tone, pause and emotions
- Once you have read the letter, ask the team if they understood the letter or want you to read it again. Read it again if required

3) Discussion:

- After every letter, you will find a set of questions to ask the team. Ask those questions and involve the group to discuss their thoughts
- Create a safe and open space to have these conversations. Encourage them to share their points and views
- Capture some key points shared by the group in the feedback form and share it with the core team/design team at PANI/ Phicus
- Remember that the letter is only a tool to help you have a rich conversation about the topic. Talk more about the topic in the letter, rather than Sahuri or her story!

In times of COVID-19, you may have to conduct Virtual Sahuri sessions.

- 1) Preparation before zoom call
 - a) Facilitator will need to record the audio file of Sahuri letter and save it in your mobile
 - b) Schedule the zoom call with the block team
 - c) Inform all the participants to select a silent place to connect which has good internet connectivity

- 2) Virtual session
 - a) Greet all the participants and build context for the letter reading session over Zoom call
 - b) Before sharing the audio file, inform the participants that, we have received the Sahuri letter, but due to the pandemic we are not able to share this letter with them in person. The audio recording of the letter will be shared on WhatsApp for your reference. Next time when we meet in person, we will share that letter with all of you which is kept safe in the envelop.
 - c) Share the audio file with all the participants over a WhatsApp group and ask them to download. Ensure that everyone downloads the audio file.
 - d) During the session, give them a 15 min break so they can listen to the letter. After listening to the audio file, ask them to log back into the call
 - e) After 15 minutes, ensure all participants have logged back. Facilitate the discussion by asking questions to everyone. Make sure everyone participates in the discussion.
 - f) While ending the call, share the feedback link with everyone and ask them to fill in their views.

Letter 19 – Building Credibility for your organization

Namaste, my friends from (name of the Block)

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Hope all of you had a good break during Diwali and got to spend a lot of time with your family. I had a wonderful time this year. Mukeshji's brothers and their family came over to our house for the celebration. We spend 4 days together with a lot of food, laughter and fun. All the children really enjoyed themselves. My mother-in-law was very happy as she had her entire family under one roof after a break of 2.5 years because of COVID-19.

(pause)

You remember, I told you that Ali Bhaiya had mentioned that we will be expanding in other districts and one of the districts was where Chandra, my sister stays. Well, all of that was becoming reality now. There were lot of plans being made to expand our work in two other districts by Naveen Bhaiya and everyone in the Head Office. I was really excited as I wanted Chandra to join and be a part of the organizations as a CRP. Let's hope that becomes a reality too.

(pause)

A couple of weeks ago, Naveen Bhaiya asked a few of us if we wanted to go to the other Blocks and help set up the program there. This would mean that we would help the team hire all the CRPs and start the work in at least 2 blocks. I asked Naveen Bhaiya if Chandra's block was a part of the plan. He said, *'Yes, it is, in fact, our Block office is going to be in that village.'* I was so excited that I immediately said 'yes'. Naveen bhaiya said, *'what is the hurry Sahuri, why don't you ask your family and let me know by next week?'* I said, *'Don't worry Naveen Bhaiya, they will agree to let me go, considering Chandra is there to help me. Please put my name down for this work.'*

(pause)

I was so excited that I couldn't wait to get home and tell Mukesh ji and Amma. I hoped that they will not say no, considering I so confidently asked Naveen Bhaiya to write my name down. Later that day, when I told Mukesh ji and Amma, they both instantly agreed. My son, Deepu though, was throwing a tantrum. He did not want me to go away for a week. I had to convince him, and I told him I will get him a new toy car when I come back. He finally agreed.

(pause)

I immediately called Chandra and told her about the plan. She was so excited that she started talking about all the temples we needed to visit and some other places that she wanted to show me. I had to remind her that I was coming on work and would not have time for many other things. I felt so important, having to travel to another district to do some work. What was even better was that Rathna also decided to join and she would be in the same block as me. Rathna, Chandra and me, we will have so much fun, I was thinking.

(pause)

After a long day of travel, we reached the Block office. The Block office at present just a space that was hired. There was still no furniture or anything else in the office. The new Block Coordinator, Alok ji, was there, and he seemed very friendly. He was also a part of one of the existing district BCs and he was getting transferred here to set up the entire program. We were about 8 of us who would be responsible for getting as many CRPs signed up for the program in the next one week.

(pause)

That day, Alok ji shared the plan with all of us for the next few days. We were going to work in pairs and were responsible to go to as many villages as possible. We were supposed to share about our program and what we do. We were also required to collect some basic demographics about the village and profile of women who could be potential CRPs. This would help Alok ji and the team when they opened up the application process.

(pause)

The next morning Rathna and I set out early in the morning. We went to the first village and met the Sarpanch. We told him about the name of our organization and the kind of work we do, hoping that he would have heard of us or know us from somewhere. Instead, he had a blank look. When we told him that we will be starting a program in their village, he said, *'So many people come, so many organizations start something or the other in the village, then they go away. We really don't know what they did and what's the difference. You do what you have to do, anyway you will not last too long.'* Rathna and I were a bit shocked. We tried our best to tell him about what we do and how we would work with the farmers in the village, but he was not interested. Disappointed, we left from there to the next village.

(pause)

The next 4 villages we visited, we got similar response. The Panchayat was not so excited about the program, or they didn't seem to know much about our organization and the kind of work we have done in other blocks. I was completely lost; I did not know what else to tell them or how to convince them. We regrouped at the Block office at the end of the day. Alok bhaiya asked all of us how our day was. I was so worried to answer that question. I felt like we were not able to accomplish what we came here to do. Meanwhile, I heard all the other teams share their points and I was relieved that we were not the only ones who experienced this. All other teams had similar reactions from the village heads. I looked at Rathna and she looked relieved as well.

(pause)

Alok bhaiya said, *'Imagine yourself in the other person's shoes. If someone had come to your home, two young women, and told you that they will teach you new techniques of farming and water conservation, what would you have thought? In fact, don't our CRPs face this everyday even when they are from the same village? This is bound to happen. The Panchayat doesn't know who you are, doesn't know your organization, doesn't know about the work you are doing, nothing. For them, you are just two strangers, and they might even look at you as some imposters.'* By then, Rathna couldn't hold back her feelings. She said, *'Then what do we do Alok bhaiya? If they don't take us seriously, how will we tell them about what we can do for them and the community?'* We all nodded as we had the same question running in our head.



(pause)

Alok bhaiya said, *'Before you tell them what you can do for them, it is important to talk about what you have done already! You can spend time talking about the organization and the program, talk about all the impact you have been able to create with farmers, all the CRPs you have been able to support, it will build credibility for our work. This will then help them imagine, what you can do for them. You don't need to tell them in so many words. Before you talk about yourself and where you are from, talk about our organization, show them our video from the website, show them some videos from the ground on how the farmers have benefited, these will all help in building credibility for you and our organization.'*

(pause)

We were all still a bit confused. Alok bhaiya said, *'The objective of your first meeting with them is not to tell them everything you know and everything you can do. It is to understand what situation they are in and what kinds of challenges they are facing. Once you learn that, show them what we have done in the past, in other districts. If they see that you have been able to help some other villages in other district, they will warm up to you. You have to also talk about how we have made our CRPs so strong that they can continue this work even when we are not present in the village. This is our unique value point, and we should highlight it whenever we can.'* We finally understood what Alok bhaiya was trying to say. I was really excited to see how we could have these conversations the next day with some of the villages.

(pause)

The next morning, Rathna and I set out to go to our next set of villages. We did what Alok bhaiya told us. We did not immediately talk about what we can do for them or their community, we spoke about our organization, our work in the two districts, some successes we have had. We also shared some videos of the farmers and CRPs. We asked them what challenges they faced and how they are managing it at this point. As they shared their challenges, we were able to tell them what we have done to address those issues in other districts. This really helped us have a great conversation. In fact, in some villages, they brought all the women together so we can share this information with them. This was so different from the previous day; Rathna and I were thrilled.

(pause)

The next few days, we made a lot of headway and were able to talk to many women in the village to explain about our organization, our program, our CRPs and the work we had done. It was so satisfying to be a part of this exercise. I am so glad I agreed to be a part of it. I couldn't wait to write to you about this new experience I had. Have you experienced anything like this in the past? Do write to me. I will be waiting for your letters.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I have to help Chandra make some sweets to send with me when I go home tomorrow. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 19

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of building credibility for her organization from her letter?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) How do you practice the skill of building credibility for yourself and your CRPs in your community?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Building credibility for your organization and program is important and it helps your CRPs establish themselves sooner
- 2) The community feels a sense of pride to be associated with the organization and the good work done by the organization
- 3) Building credibility is a continuous process – do it as and when you can, even with people who know about your organization

Letter 20 – Letting go and trusting your team

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am doing well. I have been very happy and exciting after my visit to Chandra's block. That trip taught me so many new things about expanding our work in a completely new area. I wish I get a chance sometime soon for another trip to see how the program is progressing.

(pause)

While I was away for one week, I had sleepless nights the entire week. I was really enjoying the work that I was doing, but I was also worried about what was happening back home with my children and also with my CRPs. I was constantly feeling guilty that they may need me at any time and I was not available for them. Especially my CRPs. At home, I knew my mother-in-law would be able to manage. Do you also feel guilty when you are not able to be there for your team or family?

(pause)

As soon as I came back, I planned to have a meeting with all my CRPs. I wanted to make sure that they were not struggling without me. I planned to visit each one of them and spend time with them. I also checked with Ali bhैया if any of my CRPs had reached out to him in my absence. He said that only one CRP, Kanta had reached out to him for some technical issue, but everything else was fine.

(pause)

I had an uncomfortable feeling about this. My CRPs reached out to me either on a daily basis or at least once in two days. They would reach out to me for some technical issue or to get more information about some scheme, else to just update me on what was going on. It was unlikely that they wouldn't reach out to me for so long and not even reach out to Ali bhैया. While I told them I would be traveling, they knew I would always be available to take their calls and help them with anything.

(pause)

First, I visited Meera. She seemed very happy to see me. She shared an update of all the work she had done in the last one week. She had also taken some videos and photos of the farmer meetings to show me as I was not there. I said, *'Meera, were you able to manage everything on your own last week? Did you need any help or support for your work?'* She said, *'No Didi, everything was perfectly fine. I had some doubt last week, but I called Shanta Didi and she helped me. I was worried how I will manage without you, but it was perfectly ok.'* I was happy to hear that, but at the same time, I had a feeling of some loss inside me.

(pause)

Next, I visited Durga. Durga in her usual style came and gave me a big hug. She said, *'Didi, what did you bring for me from your trip? Did you get nice sweets there?'* I knew she would ask me for sweets, and I had taken some for her. As she was munching on the sweets she said, *'Didi, I really missed you! It has been so long since I saw you.'* I told her that I missed her as well. I asked her the same question I asked Meera. She said, *'No Didi,*

I managed it on my own. Luckily there were no situations that were new or unknown, so I was able to manage on my own.' Again, I was happy, but was I not needed anymore?

(pause)

The next day, I visited Shanta and Kanta, the sisters I told you about. The same story there. They didn't feel the need to reach out to me. Kanta said that there was an issue with the crops of one of the farmers and she wasn't sure what to do. She called Ali bhैया instead of me as she thought I would be traveling and would be busy to take her calls. I did tell them that my first priority would be to work with them irrespective of where I was. Both of them said, it was perfectly ok, and they managed well without any problems.

(pause)

One by one, I met all the other CRPs in my team. All of them had the same story. The newer ones, who were only 2-3 months old in the program, called one of the senior CRPs if they needed help or sent a voice message on WhatsApp and got their problems resolved with someone on the group. The more I heard all of them, I started to have an existential crisis. They didn't seem to need me anymore! What if they manage on their own and never reach out to me? What will I do, what will happen to my job! I had so many thoughts in my head as I went home that evening.

(pause)

As I just finished preparing dinner, as if there was some telepathic connection, Jagriti didi called me on my phone. I was so happy to see her call, I picked up in one ring. I said, 'Hello Didi, how are you doing? It has been so long since I spoke to you.' She said, 'Yes, Sahuri. How was your trip? I saw some picture of you on Facebook and it looked so lovely that you were interacting with all the panchayats. I am so proud of you. Thought I will call and talk to you. How have you been?' I said, 'The trip was great Didi, I got to learn a lot and interact with so many people, it was wonderful.' Jagriti didi then said, 'Why are you sounding so sad? Is everything ok at home?'

(pause)

After a long pause, fighting back my tears, I said, 'Didi, when I came back to work, I felt like my CRPs don't need me anymore. They seem to be managing their work on their own, they are able to figure out what to do if they have problems. I am feeling a bit insecure with this. What if I am not needed anymore, what if I can't help them anymore? They will become so independent that I will not be needed! This is a very scary thought to have Didi. I still have so much to do, so much to learn!' I started tearing up as I was saying all this.

(pause)

Jagriti Didi listened to me patiently and said, 'Sahuri, please calm down. This is a natural process when you work with any team. The team will become independent and be able to do about 80% of the tasks on their own. There will be only about 20% of the tasks for which they may need someone else's help. The 20% will mostly be technical support. Since they have spent a lot of time in the program, they also know where to get help from. So, they will go directly to seek help in your absence. It is nothing to worry about. In fact, you should be happy that your team has reached this level of independence. You have a big role to play in this. You have provided enough support and groomed them to feel confident and reach out to whoever they think will help them.'

(pause)

I was listening to Didi intently. She continued, *'Look at it this way – you don't have to handhold them as much as you needed to earlier. You can use this time to learn something for yourself, like the typing on computer. You can use this time to go to other districts and help replicate what you have done in your village. There is so much time for you to learn new things. You have to LET GO! You have to trust your team and the knowledge and capacity you have built in them and trust them to do the right thing. Always assure them that you will be there when they need you but encourage them to operate independently. It is good for you and good for them in the long run when they need to work independently. You should be celebrating this and not hanging on to it and worrying about it. You should let go!'*

(pause)

I let it all sink in as Jagriti didi was telling me all of this. We spoke for a few more minutes and I instantly felt better. Sometimes, getting another person's point of view about a problem we are dealing with, is so refreshing. They see it in a completely different perspective. I thought about what Didi told me all night. She was absolutely right! I was holding on to the feeling of wanting to be needed or of use to my team. The truth was that they are doing very well, and I have to let go. If I want to see them as agri-prenerus in the next 2 years, I have to make them independent and not dependent on me. Such a valuable lesson I learnt from Jagriti Didi.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, have you felt like this before? Do you also feel insecure? Have you had trouble with letting go? Do write to me, I would love to hear about your experiences.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I have to serve dinner for my family. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri



Reflection questions after Letter 20

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of her ability to let go and trust her team from her letter?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) How do you practice the skill of building independence amongst your CRPs in your community?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) It is important to let go and trust our team, especially when they have been there for a long time and have been experts in the technical areas
- 2) Be available for them and ensure they can reach out to you when they need. Avoid micromanaging their schedule and deliverables when you have matured CRPs
- 3) Use the time that you are able to make in developing yourself and learning new things.
- 4) Remember to LET GO; it is ok to LET GO!

Letter 21 – Influencing Stakeholders

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am doing very well. I am also happy to let you know that my team is now working independently with very limited input from my end. It has given me some time to get involved in a few other initiatives that are happening at the Block. I never imagined something like this will happen a year ago. How are all of you doing? How is your team? Do write to me, I would love to hear from you.

(pause)

Last week, another NGO, called Swasth Swaasth (good health), that works on providing preventive health care services started doing a few camps in our Block. They believe that after COVID-19, there have been a lot of health issues. If we can be proactive about it and do regular health check-ups, we can take some preventive action against the same. While I was waiting at the bus stop to go to Meera's village, I saw a lady waiting for the bus with a big bag. We got talking and she told me that she works for Swasth Swaasth and was helping with setting up the camps in the village.

(pause)

We got into the same bus, and got seats also together, so we ended up chatting the whole way. Her name is Sapna, and she is a medical officer. She told me all about her work and the camps that they are doing, and I told them about our work and the communities we engage with. She was very impressed with the kind of work we do and the number of community members we engage with. She also told me about health-related challenges that are showing up in many people after recovering from COVID-19. It was interesting to listen to her story, I didn't even realise Meera's stop had arrived. She gave me her card and I gave her my number, as I got off the bus.

(pause)

Two days ago, I got a call from an unknown number. When I answered it, it was Sapna Didi? She sounded very worried. She said, *'Sahuri, I am in your village, and we are planning for a health camp in the primary school here. If you are free, can you please come here? I need your help with something'.* *'What happened Didi, is everything ok?'* I asked. *'You just come here Sahuri; I will explain.'* I was close by, so I quickly went to the primary school.

(pause)

Rathna was with me, so I took her along as well. Both of us reached the primary school. As we were approaching the school, we saw the Sarpanch standing near the entrance. Sapna Didi and a few others in white doctor's coats were also standing next to him. The situation seemed a bit tensed. Sapna Didi saw me walking and came towards me. She said, *'Sahuri, so glad you came. We are trying to set up a camp for the village and the Sarpanch is not very happy about it. He said, we had to take his permission before we did this. We have taken permission from the Block Health office and I have a letter from them that we can conduct these camps. He is not willing to listen to me, so I thought I will call you as you know all of them really well.'*



(pause)

I said, 'Sapna Didi, I don't know what I can do. If he didn't listen to you, I am not sure if he will listen to me. I will try my best.' I walked up to the Sarpanch and said, 'Namaste Sarpanch ji, how are you? What is happening?' He said, 'Sahuri, what are you doing here? You don't have any meetings to do or visit other villages? Why are you getting involved in all this? It is between me and them.' I said, 'Of course Sarpanch ji. I was just passing by, and I saw you and also saw Sapna Didi, thought I will come and say hi to both of you and see how you are doing. How are you Sarpanch ji, long time since I saw you. How is your knee pain?' He said, 'Yes, I had got to the city to stay with my son for a few days. I wanted to get my knees check in the big hospital there and see if they will give me some medicines to help me with my knee. But because of COVID, it was so crowded, and we did not get any appointment. I had to return without visiting the doctor.'

(pause)

'That's really sad. You might have to go again to the city and get it checked. But Sapna Didi is a doctor, she should be able to help you, no Didi? You can check his knee and see what is wrong?' Sapna Didi looked a bit uncomfortable. She said, 'Sahuri, I am not a doctor, I am a medical officer – I coordinate all the camps and the doctors will visit and do the camps. I can talk to the doctor who is visiting tomorrow. He is from Delhi and a very well-known doctor. I am sure he can help Sarpanch ji and give him medicines or refer him to someone who can do further tests.' Sarpanch ji, didn't look very impressed. He just sat there without responding to Sapna Didi.

(pause)

'Sarpanch ji, the camp will happen tomorrow, and the doctors will check your leg, and give you medicine. Isn't that great? You don't have to go back to the city again,' I said. 'There is no camp happening here,' he sternly responded. I said, 'But why Sarpanch ji, what happened?' He said, 'These people have not informed me earlier and they have not taken any permission. Tomorrow, we have a big festival in the temple. Everyone is going to go to the temple in the morning for the pooja. Even if they keep the camp, many people won't come. Then the Block Officer will call me and shout at me for not arranging many people for the camp. We cannot do it tomorrow, that's final.'

(pause)

I had also forgotten about the festival and the pooja. I also was planning to go with my entire family. I said, 'You are right Sarpanch ji, tomorrow will be difficult for the villagers to come for the camp. Sapna Didi, are there any other dates on which the camp can be done? Tomorrow there will be very few people who will turn out even if you have the camp.' Sapna ji looked worried. She said, 'The doctors will be here tomorrow morning and when we spoke about this in the Block office, they did not tell us anything about the festival or the villagers not being available. If we don't do it tomorrow, we will have to do it after 6 months.'

(pause)

I said, 'That is too long. Sarpanch ji also has to get his knees checked soon. So, we only have tomorrow's date is what you are saying. Will the doctors be ok to start the camp in the afternoon and go on till late in the night? We have enough lighting in the school so even if it is dark, it won't be a problem.' Sapna Didi said, 'Yes, that can be done. We can start the

camp at 3pm in the afternoon. We will be done by about 9pm which will be good enough time for the doctors to rest and get ready for their travel the next day. We can use today and tomorrow morning to spread the word in the villages and ensure they know about the camp.'

(pause)

Sarpanch ji was listening carefully. I said, *'That maybe a good idea. Anyway, it is very hot during the day and people will get tired waiting in the sun. If it is afternoon, early evening, it should not be so bad. We can ask all the younger people to come in the afternoon and older people in the evening. What do you think Sarpanch ji? Will this work? Rathna and I along with Sapna Didi's team can inform all the villagers about this.'* Sarpanch ji was still looking sceptical. I asked Sapna Didi, *'Didi, who are the doctors who are coming and what will they do in the camp?'* She replied, *'We have a General Physician, who will do regular check-up. We will do blood test; BP test; Sugar test etc. We also have an eye doctor, a paediatrician and an ENT specialist who will come.'*

(pause)

I looked at Sarpanch ji and said, *'This looks like a good team of doctors who are coming. Especially now since so many of our children were not well last month. Since they are not yet vaccinated, we have to be extremely careful. Moving this to 6 months, we don't know what will happen. What if there is another lockdown or something like that, we cannot say.'* Sarpanch ji, looked a bit worried now. He said, *'Ok, let's go ahead with the afternoon plan. Next time, Sapna, you have to talk to me first and then go to the Block Office to get a date, understood?'* Sapna Didi, nodded and acknowledged his message.

(pause)

As we were leaving from there, Sapna Didi thanked me profusely. She asked me to come with my family for the check-up. I told her that I will definitely come. Rathna was listening to all of this silently. She then said, *'How did you manage this, Sahuri? How did you manage to convince the Sarpanch?'* I just smiled at her and said, *'When two people want something and it is not possible because of some reason, both of them have to let go a little bit and meet midway. We have to help them find that midway. It may not be idea, but it will work for both. That is what happened here I think.'*

(pause)

Quite honestly, I didn't know what the outcome of this situation would be. I just tried to find the best way possible for both of them. Luckily the two of them worked that out. I feel like if we listen to people and try to understand their problems, the answers will be right there. Don't you agree? Write to me and tell me what you think.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I have to make some preparations for the pooja tomorrow. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 21

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of her ability to influence these two different stakeholders?
- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.
- 3) How do you practice the skill of listening and influencing your stakeholders?
- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) It is important to listen to people and understand their point of view before you try and change their mind
- 2) Ask questions and genuinely try to understand challenges that your stakeholders are facing
- 3) When two people have different thoughts/ outcomes that is expected, you could explore an alternate option that can be a mid-point for both of them
- 4) Always keep in mind the end objective and what is good for the community

Letter 22 – Aspiring to grow in the organization

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? I am doing well. Things have been really busy at my end for the last two weeks. While it is season time, my CRPs are doing really well and are managing a big load of work on their own. They only call me if there is something new and different, that they haven't handled in the past. I have been spending time helping Ali bhaiya get all the reports done for the Block and create documentation for the head office. I sometimes help out Alok bhaiya also when he has too much work to do and no time to create reports for his Block. I must say, I am enjoying this. It gives me a full view of the entire Block and not just my 10 villages.

(pause)

Something really amazing happened last week. I went along with Ali bhaiya to the Head office as there was a monthly review that was scheduled. Since I have been creating all the reports, Ali Bhaiya requested me also to come along for the meeting. Like you know, I love traveling and learning new things, so I immediately agreed to go for the meeting. It was a day-long meeting where all the blocks and district teams were meeting to share updates about their block and also learn about what the priorities for the next three months were going to be.

(pause)

Ali Bhaiya and I set out early in the morning to go to the Head office. When we reached the office, there were many people from various blocks that had come there. All the new Block teams were also there. I realised that I did not recognise many people. Ali Bhaiya said it was because we have grown really fast and have had to hire lot of new people in the team. Some people I knew from the new Blocks, came and spoke to me. Alok Bhaiya was also there. He was telling me about the fact that they received many applications for the CRP position after the initial week of discussions with the villages. I was very happy to hear that.

(pause)

We all settled down for the meeting after our morning prayer. I was so excited; I couldn't sit still. Our Chief Functionary addressed the group and welcomed all of us. He also said that he was happy to see so many Cluster Coordinators join the meeting. He encouraged all the Block Coordinators to bring in more of us into these meetings so all of us could learn from each other. Our Program Director spoke next. He spoke about some new programs that were going to get implemented and some big funding that we had received. Everyone was very excited! His speech ended with all of us clapping for a very long time.

(pause)

One by one, all the Block Coordinators started sharing their presentations, updates and progress for the month. I was amazed at seeing their reports. Some of them were very clear and crisp. They were able to share pictures and videos on the process on the field with the farmers. I was reminded of what Alok Bhaiya had told us to build our credibility.

I thought it will be the same when it comes to sharing the work we have done for the month.

(pause)

Next was Ali Bhaiya's turn. He went up and started presenting his report. As he was presenting, he turned around and looked at me and said, '*Sahuri, what is this number that you have put here.*' I said, '*It is the total yield our farmers generated for the month.*' I was very scared that the report was not clear. Just then, our Chief Functionary said, '*Ali, how come you are asking her?*' Ali Bhaiya said, '*Bhaiya, Sahuri has learnt how to create reports and has been doing so for the last 6 months. She has put this presentation together.*' The Chief Functionary looked at me and said, '*Well done Sahuri, I am very happy to hear that you have learnt something new and implemented it. Why don't you come in front?*' I was a bit nervous, but I still went and stood next to Ali Bhaiya.

(pause)

Ali Bhaiya started explaining his presentation again. In many places he paused, and said, '*Sahuri, why don't you explain this!*' I was taken aback initially. Felt so nervous that I thought I will faint. I took a deep breath and explained whatever I could. This happened a few more times. Finally, we finished our presentation. My throat was dry, I wanted to drink some water desperately. Everyone started clapping loudly. Our Program Director said, '*Sahuri, these extra loud claps are for you! You did a wonderful job in explaining all of this. It was very clear. Well done!*'

(pause)

I was so relieved to hear that. As we went and sat down at our place, many people congratulated me and said, '*Well done*'. Naveen Bhaiya come up to me later and said, he was very proud of me. I was so excited. While I was not prepared, I somehow managed to share all the details. Ali Bhaiya was also very happy. He jokingly said, '*Sahuri, from the next time, you will do all these presentations.*' I felt really good that so many people appreciated my effort. Since I was collating data from all the villages and consolidating it, I had some idea on how to speak about it. Ali Bhaiya was very supportive as well. He kept encouraging me to share my points.

(pause)

When I came back home in the evening, I shared this with Mukesh ji. He could not believe that I stood in front of so many people and shared details of our Block. He was telling his mother, '*See Amma, your daughter-in-law has become such an important person. She is presenting and all in front of 100s of people.*' My mother-in-law very sweetly said, '*Who's daughter-in-law is she after all!*' I was having a good laugh listening to both of them. In the Block office as well, Ali bhaiya told all the other Cluster Coordinators about the presentation. Some of them were very happy about it, some of them didn't say much. I felt like I was in the clouds for two days after the meeting.

(pause)

Yesterday morning, I received a call from Naveen Bhaiya. He told me that the Program Director was very happy with my presentation and the way I was able to answer a few tough questions. He also asked Naveen Bhaiya if I would be interested in implementing a new program around 'Women and Gender' in our block. The program was new, and they were looking for reliable people to manage it in various blocks. For our block, they

wanted to check if I would be interested. I was so shocked; I had no idea what to say. Naveen Bhaiya understood this, and he told me to think about it and let me know. He said that he believes I would be really good in implementing the program. It needed someone like me who understood our organization, who knew the community and could manage a team. It would be a great learning opportunity also for me.

(pause)

I told Naveen Bhaiya that I will think about it, talk to my husband and get back to him. Naveen Bhaiya also asked me to talk to Ali bhaiya and get his opinion. I was so blank; I had no idea what to think. I had mixed feelings throughout the day. I was excited that I will get to do something new and different. I had never worked in Women and Gender area, so this would be new to learn. At the same time, I was tensed and nervous. What if I am not able to do this? What if I am not able to deliver on the project? What if they ask me to leave because I cannot deliver? Lots of thoughts were coming in my head.

(pause)

I spoke to Ali bhaiya and explained my conversation with Naveen Bhaiya. Ali bhaiya told me that they had spoken about it a few days ago and Ali bhaiya had recommended my name. He was very confident that I could do it. He said that I will get a lot of training to help me learn about the new domain. He was pushing me to think about it hard and take up the opportunity.

(pause)

At home, after our dinner, I spoke to Mukesh ji and Amma ji. I told them about the conversation with Naveen bhaiya. They were also a bit confused. They were not able to clearly tell me what I should do. They said, if you think you can manage this work along with the house and children, go ahead and do it. We don't know anything about the work so we can't say much. I was relieved that they were no major objections for me to take on something new.

(pause)

I am still very confused. I don't know what to do! Should I take this new opportunity on? What if it does work out? What if I lose this role and the new role? What will happen to my CRPs? What if I fail? What do you think? Do you think I will be able to learn and implement this program? Please do write to me, I would love to hear your thoughts on this.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I am going to get some sleep; I have had such a long day. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 22

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's experience of learning and taking up every new opportunity to learn about the block?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) Do you think Sahuri should take up this new role? How do you think she can prepare for her new role?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Spend a few hours in a week learning something new and beyond your day-to-day job
- 2) Take some risks, it is ok if it is not perfect, try something new
- 3) Have a goal and an aspiration for yourself. When you are keen to do it, everything else will fall in place
- 4) Build a support network around you who will help, support and guide you along the way

Letter 23 – Motivating CRPs to think long term

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? Hope all of you and your family members are doing well. I am also doing well. I have taken 4 days holiday this week. It has been very hectic at work and at home for the last few months, so I thought I will take some time off and relax at home. I also have been wanting to visit a temple nearby for a long time with my entire family. I did that yesterday and it was such a wonderful experience. I came back home with a lot of positive energy. What do you do to recharge yourself after a stressful time?

(pause)

Since I have been on leave, and had so much time on my hands, I decided to invite all my CRPs for lunch to my house. When I shared this idea with Rathna, she was thrilled and wanted to be a part of it as well. She said she will make a couple of dishes and bring it, so it won't be very hectic for me. I anyway planned to make some simple lunch so we can all just spend time together and relax. My mother-in-law was more excited than me. She loves cooking and loves to feed people. This was like an assignment for her, and she started deciding the menu and making a list of things we needed to buy.

(pause)

When I told all my CRPs, they were very excited. They liked the idea of coming out of home for lunch and a day of fun rather than work. There were a few CRPs who said they would not be able to make it as it was a long distance from their village, but I was glad a lot of them were willing to come. My mother-in-law and I spent some time making sweets and preparing for lunch.

(pause)

Yesterday, about 8 of my CRPs and Rathna came over for lunch. Many of them brought some dish or another from their home. I was joking with them that I did not need to cook for the next two days. We all sat down and had some nimbu pani along with some namkeen. It was a good environment of fun and laughter. Everyone was relaxed and happy to be in an informal environment. I noticed my mother-in-law also was having a great time.

(pause)

After an hour or so, we all had lunch. Everyone really enjoyed the food and praised my mother-in-law for all her cooking. We were all so full that we couldn't move. All of us just sat down and relaxed a bit till we felt the lethargy leave us. As we were sitting/ lying down and relaxing, Kanta said, *'Didi, when you were a little girl, what did you want to become?'* I looked at her and thought hard. I said, *'I don't remember if I had any thoughts like that. I think, we always knew that we would get married and have to manage a house. When my baba encouraged me to study, I thought I will become a teacher. But that wish didn't last for long.'*

(pause)

Then I said, *'what do you want to be in the next few years Kanta?'* Kanta looked a bit blank. *'I don't know Didi, I haven't thought if it yet.'* So, I turned around and asked the rest of the group, *'where do you want to be in the next 3-4 years?'* Everyone was deep in thought and were trying to figure out what their purpose was. There was silence for a good 5 mins after that question.

(pause)

Rathna spoke first. She said, *'I have learnt tailoring when I was a young girl from my father. I think it is in my blood. I want to learn a lot more on tailoring and work in a tailoring shop. I want to make nice designs of dresses and blouses. I want to make nice frocks for my daughter also.'* I said, *'That is lovely Rathna. I did not know you could stitch. Maybe after you learn, you can make some nice blouses for me.'* *'Yes Sahuri, I will do that for sure.'*

(pause)

Durga said, *'I want to work in our organization as a Cluster Coordinator. Then after few years, I want to become Block Coordinator also.'* We all clapped when we heard this. *'Wonderful goal to have for yourself Durga. You know you have to work very hard for that right? And you have to start working towards it today! Take on as many opportunities that come your way to learn new things'* I said.

(pause)

Shanta said, *'I don't know what I want to do in 3-4 years, but one thing I am very sure. I want to be doing some work outside the house and not be at home. The year I was at home, felt like torture for me. I want to be able to earn some money for myself and my child. I might do this only for longer, otherwise, something else within the village where I can work and take care of my children will be ideal.'* Meera said, *'I want to be an agri-preneur. I want to ensure that the work we have started in our program stays in the community for a long time. In that way, I can also earn some money through it.'*

(pause)

Slowly, everyone shared what they would like to be doing. Rathna looked at me and said, *'What about you Sahuri, what do you want to do?'* I said, *'I want to be a social worker in our Block. Anything I can do to help our Block in terms of education, health, agriculture, gender, I want to be able to do it. I definitely want to be working and supporting my family. I also want to be a good role model for my daughter to stand on her own feet.'*

(pause)

Everyone was looking at me and nodding. Suddenly, my mother-in-law said, *'No one has asked me what I want to do?'* Everyone started laughing. *'Yes, Amma ji, what do you want to do?'* we all asked together. She said, *'I want to be happy and healthy, and want to see my great grand child's face.'* We all laughed. I said, *'Amma ji, that will depend on Anita and when she chooses to have a child. We can't say it will happen anytime soon!'*

(pause)

I said, *'I am glad that all of us are thinking about something or the other to help us be more independent and bring in some money for ourselves. We can't deny that having something to do is very empowering and also satisfying. I would never give that up now that I have experienced it. We may not be clear about what we want to do, but it is important to have a*

purpose in life. It is important for us to move towards that purpose. Otherwise, we will not grow.'

(pause)

Rathna said, 'Thanks Kanta for that question and Sahuri for forcing us to think. If I had not thought about it today, I would have never known that I want to focus on my tailoring. I have so many ideas running in my head. I will go remove my sewing machine and start doing small things every week. This way it will motivate me to stay focused on my purpose.'

(pause)

One by one the rest of them also shared what they want to do over the next few months to figure out what they want to do and have a goal for themselves. I was really happy that we had this conversation. A simple question turned into a powerful conversation. I think we need to keep asking ourselves this question every now and then. We might get a lot more answers. I plan to ask Anita and Deepu also on what they want to do. Strangely it has never occurred to me to ask.

(pause)

We spent a wonderful day together and, in the evening, all of them headed back to their respective homes. We all agreed that at least once in a few months we should meet like this so we can talk and share our thoughts with each other. We plan to meet at Rathna's house next. She is going to invite her CRPs also.

(pause)

So, my dear friends, what do you want to be in the next 3-4 years? Do you have a clear idea of what you want to do? Do you have a purpose? If you do, please write to me and let me know. I would love to hear all about it.

(pause)

Ok, I have to go now. I am going to eat some sweets that Shanta's mother-in-law sent me. At this rate, I will finish all the sweets all by myself. I will write to you soon.

Until then, stay safe, healthy, and happy.

Your friend,

Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 23

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's question around 'what they want to be in the next few years?' Is it relevant for us to have these conversations with our CRPs?

- 2) Have you experienced anything similar? If yes, share some examples on what happened.

- 3) What do you want to be doing in the next 3-4 years? Do you have a purpose for yourself?

- 4) What are some tips and ideas you want to share with Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Have a purpose/ vision for yourself. You might not have clarity right away, but reflect on it, talk to people about it and bring in more clarity
- 2) Encourage your CRPs to think long term. Share the opportunities that may come their way so they can make some informed decisions

Letter 24 – Importance of being an agri-preneur

Namaste, my friends from **(name of the Block)**

This is your friend Sahuri. How are you doing today? It has been two years since I am writing to you. Can you believe it? Time has gone by so quickly; I haven't even realised. I feel like I have established such a wonderful connection with you. With every letter I write, I am sharing a part of me with you – some happy, some sad, some embarrassing stories, but I really enjoyed writing every one of them to you.

(pause)

So much has changed in the last two years in our program as well. Our agri and water related program in our Block comes to an end in the next 6 months. Our organization will move into a technical support organization. This will mean that we will help and support our CRPs only when needed. The constant handholding will not be a part of the program. Our CRPs are going to be agri-preneurs in the next 6 months. Which means, they will work independently and charge a service fee for all the service they provide to the farmers and community.

(pause)

This is a really exciting phase of our program. We have been planning and visualising this phase for the last 4 years. So happy to see it all become a reality. Out of the 9 CRPs I have, 4 of them opted to be agri-preneurs. The other 5 will become CRPs in another program we are about to implement. Shanta, Meera, Durga, Kanta has all been working in this program for a long time and have become experts in their own way. I have seen them grow into strong, independent women. At the beginning of this program, it was hard for me to believe that we will get this far. Here we are, just like our work in drip irrigation, it takes little by little effort for all of us to get this far.

Going forward, my agri-preneurs will provide services to the community, will also go to other villages and provide their services. She will also connect with various farmer centres and help the farmers get better quality seeds as well as a good price for their yield. She will be the bridge between the farmer and the market. What a powerful role to have! I am so proud of them. They are all so excited, at the same time nervous to do this role.

I have told them to remember three things always when they do this job:

- 1) Believe in yourself and believe that you know enough to help the farmers with whatever they need
- 2) Reach out for help whenever needed. The program will end, but all of us are still there, all our phone numbers remain the same. Whenever you need help of any sort, call any one of us
- 3) Never give up! There will be lot of challenges and lots of ups and downs, maybe more downs than ups in the beginning. Never give up, continue to keep growing and thriving

(pause)

Ali bhaiya will be moving to a new Block, where he will be managing the new agri and water related programs. He has set our Block up so well, given all of us the feedback and

growth that we deserve, I am sure the new Block will thrive under his leaders. Rathna, my dear friend is moving to the city along with her husband and family. Her brother-in-law stays there, and she wants to start working in a tailoring shop. I will really miss her a lot!

(pause)

Naveen Bhaiya is going to be leading a new program across 6 districts in our state. It is the same program around Women and Gender. He has been promoted to Program Director, which is fantastic news.

Jagrati Didi has decided to retire. She wants to spend more time with her grandchildren and just slowdown her life. I think this is a big loss to our community as she was a big influencer for the community. She has promised me that she will be there for me anytime I need her, like she has always been.

(pause)

My sister Chandra, she got selected as a CRP. I am so excited for her. She calls me at least three times a day with some doubt or the other. I have told her now that I will not talk to her if she is calling because of work. That is something she will learn at her own pace.

Anita, my daughter, is going to college now. She is the first girl in my family to go to college. I am so proud of her! I want her to have all the opportunities that some of us didn't. If we don't change the future of our next generation, then who else will! Deepu is in the 10th standard now. I worry about his studies, but my Anita is after him to study, so I am not so worried.

Mukesh ji has developed his farming practice with all the inputs he got. He does not go to the city for work anymore, he focuses on improving the field and the yield. Amma ji, as always, has been a big rock for me. She is like a mother to me and gives me the freedom to do anything I want to. When my Deepu gets married and brings his bride, I will be exactly the same with my daughter in law!

(pause)

You will be happy to know that I took your advice and decided to take on the new role in the Women and Gender program. It is going to be a lot of work and lot of learnings. I feel like I have to spend a lot of time and energy learning about my new role. I might start writing back to you soon once I settle down. Maybe I will have stories to share that we all can learn from.

(pause)

Today I am writing my last letter to you! I feel like I have shared whatever I can with you. Now it is your turn! Share your stories with people around you, with your CRPs, with your community. Inspire them to do better, to strive for more, to be more confident, to have a vision for themselves.

(pause)

Until then my friends, Goodbye! Take care of yourself, stay safe, healthy, and more importantly, happy. You deserve it!

Your friend for life, Sahuri

Reflection questions after Letter 24

Use the following questions to facilitate a conversation among the group. Make a note of some key highlights from the discussion:

- 1) What did you notice about Sahuri's three points that she shared for the agri-preneur? Do you agree with them? Do you have any other points to add?

- 2) How will you provide the support and courage to your CRPs to take on the role of an agri-preneur when the time comes?

- 3) How will you pass on your stories to other women to inspire them?

- 4) What parting message do you have for Sahuri?

Ensure you leave the group with the following highlights:

- 1) Stay in touch and provide support to your CRPs even after the program journey has ended. You will always be a guide and mentor to them
- 2) Encourage them to believe in themselves, ask for help when needed and never give up
- 3) Have a dream for yourself. Just like the CRPs, believe in yourself, ask for help when needed and never give up.
- 4) All the best!