



EVOLVING A PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES & PROCESSES



Contents

♦ Outreach, issues, initiatives	2
♦ Approach	6
♦ Constituency building	10
♦ Mobilizing women for local initiatives	13
♦ Facilitating enabling environment	18
♦ Institutionalizing self help support systems	21
♦ Continuing partnership with SCRIA	23
Glossary	24

Documented by Senoo Rawat – Head Programs, SCRIA

Pictures Senoo, Mohinder, Satbir – Program team, SCRIA

Design Senoo - SCRIA

Published by SCRIA

Support from Government of India, UNDP - New Delhi

Printed at Jatin Printers - Rewari

March 2007

Cover page photographs

Front - clockwise from top left – information 'chariot'; pottery making, a family living for Bimlesh of village Nangal Teju - Rewari; women spreading the message of self governance through cycle rally; Sakriya Sangathan members of village Kaklasar-Churu expressing their opinion; information booth on RTI act 2005; women & men of village Khaari Chaabri-Churu during village Panchayat; Rajbala of Mundi-Rewari weaving for livelihood; monthly meeting of a Sakriya Sangathan in progress; flagging off a campaign on RTI act 2005; celebrating women's day; community facilitator Rekha motivating women to be an active participant in governance

Back – Members of Sakriya Sangh, Sakriya Pratinidhi, Shakti Parishad & Sakriya Manch rallying for inclusive governance in Rewari district of Haryana

SCRIA, Social Centre for Rural Initiatives and Advancement, is a registered non-profit organization. Since 1979 it is working towards comprehensive and sustainable development for villages in northwest India. From its inception the organization is based at village Khori in Khol block of Rewari district in the state of Haryana. It is also known as Khori Centre.

As true social change cannot be expected to take place with the participation of only half the population, SCRIA, in a patriarchic society, mainly works with women from socially and economically disadvantaged rural communities by facilitating women groups for meaningful participation in social, political and economic development process.

The strategies and processes adopted by SCRIA for the purpose are several. Some fundamental stratagems are described in this booklet.

Outreach, Issues, Initiatives

Outreach

Area

SCRIA works in the villages of southern Haryana and northern Rajasthan in northwest India. The districts of outreach are Rewari, Mohindergarh, Gurgaon and Jhajjar in southern Haryana & Alwar, Bikaner, Churu in northern Rajasthan.

The whole region is semi arid while Bikaner & Churu districts are arid. It is interspersed with sand dunes and barren hillocks of Aravali ranges. In this semi arid - arid zone the maximum temperature rises upto 51 degree celcius in summer and plunges to 0 degree celcius in winter. The region has agrarian economy. Nearly 95% of villages in districts of Haryana & Alwar of Rajasthan are dependant on ground water for irrigation while Bikaner & Churu are primarily rain fed one-crop districts.

Industrially too the outreach area is backward though some areas of Gurgaon and a part of Rewari that are close to national capital Delhi or national highway are getting industrialized or being converted into city suburbs. Roads connect most of the villages in southern Haryana though it is not so in most of northwest Rajasthan. Other basic facilities like public transportation, health centers, means of communication etc. are in adequate numbers in southern Haryana but their number decreases rapidly as we move towards Rajasthan where they are far and few.

People

The density of population ranges from 90 to 250 persons per sq. km.. There are people of all communities and castes coexisting peacefully in the region. Traditional social structures like joint family system, extended family 'Panchayat' – council and caste based 'Panchayats' at tehsil - district - state level govern the society. All scrupulously follows their unwritten laws.

Issues of outreach

The rate of depletion of natural resources in the region is many times greater than the rate of repletion. Women in specific and community in general are given no sincere opportunity to manage and maintain their natural resources or participate in the development processes.

The region faces a chronic shortage of water, the ground water table is very low and most of the ground water belts are highly saline and not potable. With no other source of water available ground water is being exploited extensively for irrigation and industrial purposes, which is posing a grave problem in Haryana where the rate of decrease in ground water is over 1 meter per year. By 2005 many villages in Mohindergarh district found their ground water totally spent. They are back to rain fed agriculture.

The agrarian economy is the major source of livelihood for most in outreach area. No other alternative source of income is readily available though the region has a rich variety of traditional crafts but several traditional crafts are dying out along with the older craft persons. Unemployment in southern Haryana is high due to extensive land fragmentation and increased competitiveness in the traditional employment avenues, while sustainable livelihood is a big issue in northwest Rajasthan with a drought cycle of 7 years. Of the total population in the region 60% - 20% has meaningful access & relationship with banks. This relation is limited only to savings management. Credit from banks to the poor people in the region is nearly nil due to several mitigating circumstances.

The region also has a traditionally limiting and rigid patriarchal society governed by the laws of Manu, the codifier of ancient Hindu law. The role of women is defined by their place within the socio economic system. The arid conditions, prevalence of child marriage, very low rate of female literacy and lowest sex ratio in the country, with 734 women per 1000 men in Rewari district, are some of the indicators reflecting the status of women. The women in this society are naturally affected by the dominant ideology of the society, but this does not completely insulate them against an awareness of its subservient position. In the political arena too the strong patriarchal control over the political process effectively marginalizes the participation of women and other socially disadvantaged.

The issues of outreach thus can be summed up as -

- Rapid depletion of ground water table and increasing paucity of potable water
- High input cost and low productivity in agriculture
- Deforestation and soil degradation
- High rate of unemployment
- Lack of entrepreneurial opportunities
- Entrenched patriarchic social setup ensuring the continuance of subservient position of women
- Low political consciousness
- Lack of educational opportunities and facilities

Initiatives

SCRIA's vision, mission & initiatives have evolved in concurrence with the outreach, its issues and national policies.

Vision Sustainable rural development by rural communities

Mission Building capacities of rural communities for their active and meaningful participation in self-governance processes for inclusive and good governance

Initiatives

SCRIA has organized its' work around three key issues that affect the

largest number of people in the region - governance, livelihood & natural resources management. The three programs related to them are *Svashaasan* Self governance, *Samridhi* Prosperity and *Sampada Prakritik* Natural Resources.

▪ ***Svashaasan*** Self governance

Vision

Self & inclusive governance for good governance

Mission

- Empowerment of women for social political & economic justice
- Meaningful participation of women & others in decision-making processes of governance

Initiatives

- Organizing women for social political economic justice
- Mobilize men & youth for social change
- Promote participation of women & others in institutions of governance

▪ ***Samridhi*** Prosperity

Vision

Economic empowerment of women & youth

Mission

- Promote & provide opportunity for micro enterprise & entrepreneurship
- Promotion of craft persons & craft in the region

Initiatives

- Promotion of rural entrepreneur
- Micro credit support for livelihood
- Organize rural crafts person & craft and promote fair trade

▪ ***Sampada Prakritik*** Natural Resources

Vision

Effective & sustainable natural resource management

Mission

Empowerment of village communities for efficient management of water, soil, vegetation, fodder & fuel

Initiatives

- Promote water harvesting & prudent usage practices
- Soil conservation, improved dry land agricultural practices
- Vegetation, plantation & regeneration

The three programs have their operational guidelines that are followed diligently & women groups' federation known as Sakriya Sangh reviews the provisions periodically.

Convergence of initiatives

For a germane and just development the people, subjects of development, must be involved in the process. They must articulate & decide as per their needs. They must enquire, question & be instrumental in framing policies that affect their lives. For this they have to be intrinsically involved in the decision-making processes at all levels of governance.

The linchpin of all of SCRIA's initiatives is self-governance but in order to create an enabling environment for the participation of socially and economically disadvantaged in governance, SCRIA addresses their basic livelihood needs through its programs on natural resource management and income generation. Livelihood issues are intrinsically linked with people's participation in governance process for when people are hungry and have no money for living, they cannot be realistically expected to think of the distant benefits of inclusive & accountable governance.

Approach

All citizens of India have an inalienable fundamental right to participate in governance processes of the country. It is enshrined in the constitution for all citizens' without discrimination of caste, color, creed, gender, religion, region, education, language, etc.. The participation of people in governance has been strengthened time and again by various amendments and addendums to the constitution.

However in practice, people's participation in governance is limited to electing their representatives at village, block, district, state & national level. People have virtually no say in the framing of policies, laws and national - international agreements that affect them the most in their everyday lives. For the past few years in rural areas peoples' participation is being solicited by government through Panchayati Raj Institutions or during implementation of government schemes. Such participation is usually for namesake or punctuated with lots of ifs' & buts'. In some instances where a genuine effort to include people in decision making is made by government or administration it is usually scuttled by entrenched vested interests.

To involve people at micro, mezzo and macro levels of governance SCRIA facilitates opportunities for women, men and civil society organizations to understand governance and it's working. At micro level this process of facilitation is intensive and is intended for women & others from socially and economically disadvantaged communities in rural areas.

Participatory approach

SCRIA works with communities for a meaningful relationship as partners in progress with a firm belief in participatory approach for effective and sustainable development. People from outreach area, especially women, participate in problem identification & needs assessment to project formulation, implementation, monitoring & evaluation. This leads to long-term efficiency, cost sharing, self-reliance, grass root initiative, enhanced village level organizational capacities and finally to community ownership. The increased level of awareness among people also results in meaningful utilization of various development schemes.

In every village of outreach women are organized into village level Sangathans who act as initiators of the development process in the region and are responsible for various development initiatives facilitated by the organization in their respective villages. All the Sangathans are part of a three tier federating structure that is fundamental in decision-making processes for every development program undertaken and for initiating local initiatives collectively.

Planning and review

Working with the principle of participatory approach SCRIA has over

the years evolved & practiced participatory tools for planning, implementation, supervision and community management of development initiatives and services. Sangathans in respective villages initiate development or social initiatives, implement it, monitor & review the process ensuring that it is carried out as per plan and that set benchmarks are achieved. Farmer - youth groups, supports them. The process of planning & review is done at all the three level of Sangathans' federation [for more details please refer to Local Initiatives by Sangathans and Sakriya Sangh].

At organization level physical and financial review & planning of programs is done fortnightly. Program Head guides & coordinates work of various field teams, plans & allocate human & material resources, establishes & reviews financial & administrative controls and systems for - review, monitoring & evaluation assessment of organization's programs. Head of Accounts reviews accounts - finance fortnightly in accordance with accounting guidelines. The two Heads report to the Director during monthly reviews.

Participatory Impact Monitoring

Participatory impact monitoring is not only a methodology but a philosophy by which development facilitators and local communities jointly & continuously observe, document and critically reflect on the effects and changes caused by development interventions. SCRIA has made PIM a regular annual feature for its three programs to monitor the ultimate desired change. For this impacts, indicators, tools for data collection and analysis have been established.

SCRIA's setup

Head quarter & field offices

SCRIA's field offices & headquarter are located in rural areas of its' area of outreach. The head quarter is at village Khori in Rewari district of Haryana and main office for Rajasthan is at village Derajsar, Ratangarh in Churu district of Rajasthan. Being based in outreach area helps enormously in understanding the area & is conducive in establishing rapport and working relationship with the community.

Personnel

Khori & Derajsar outreach areas have their own teams for program & supportive services. Senior coordinators, supported by area coordinators & cluster coordinators, manage every program. Senior coordinators are fully responsible & independent to take decisions within the established operational framework of their units and organization. Head of Programs is in overall charge of the program teams while Head of Supportive Services for supportive services. Both Heads are answerable to the Director & Management.

Financial administration

SCRIA has an independent accounts division that works as per an operational guideline which takes into account accepted national/

international standards of accounts/ finance management and stipulations of SCRIA's funding partners'. Accounting is fully computerized and accounts division is fully responsible for ensuring complete follow up of SCRIA's and various funding partners' accounting guidelines. At the program management level too there is finance management and administration system to ensure effective and efficient use of financial resources during implementation. This is maintained by Head of Programs.

Auditing - Complete audit of accounts is done once in a financial year of April to March. This is then published in the Annual Report. Apart from this annually a team appointed by Director carries out an internal review of accounts.

Sustainability

Sustainability in the institutional context is often interpreted as how the organization will continue with the post project activities once financial support ends. SCRIA's perspective of sustainability entails putting in place institutional & financial arrangements to sustain the initiated process.

Institutional - To be sustainable, the subjects of development, the people, must initiate development themselves. A basic prerequisite of this is the capacity of people to identify and articulate their problems & tackle them. As mentioned earlier, SCRIA firmly believes in participatory approach and works accordingly. For all programs self help support systems are institutionalized wherein program constituents perform major roles as decision makers. Through this process not only responsibility is shared with outreach group but they also get an opportunity to develop appropriate skills, capacity and confidence to plan, implement, monitor and sustain the initiative to the best of their ability.

Financial - SCRIA gives high priority to cost sharing by the outreach group in all its programs. For infrastructure related activities SCRIA facilitates the establishment of village maintenance funds in the concerned villages. This helps in establishing community's ownership and in maintaining the facility post project.

Sustainability with regard to three initiatives

Governance

Encouraging women to participate in decision-making process of governance requires a certain level of intensive support to move forward in a tangible way. Post project this program is financially viable where SCRIA has to play the role of an advisor or mentor to individuals or to the Sangathans. But workshops, campaigns, dialogue, support to local groups, etc. activities require financial support from like-minded organizations.

Livelihood

This program with women groups in the outreach area is facilitated

through revolving fund that is managed as per SCRIA's established guidelines. Institutionally women groups' federation plays an important role in decision-making process while the interest & facilitation cost received from the groups financially support the activity.

Natural resources management

Women groups have the overall responsibility for managing the developed sites and assets that includes upkeep of the structures constructed & the green area developed. Village Panchayat provides meaningful support. SCRIA lends technical & management support when required. Expenses incurred in the management and upkeep of the assets is met through village maintenance funds.

Constituency Building

In 1979 organization started working for enabling women as equal partners in family and society by organizing women groups, building skills & capacity of its members and by motivating them to participate in decision-making processes for gender equity. SCRIA also facilitated schemes & programs promoted by government agencies related to water, fuel for cooking, education, child care, etc.. With all this an immediate impact was achieved but it remained local.

In the early 1990's the emerging challenges in the society evolved social dynamics that required active participation and a sense of ownership from the society. To address this effectively SCRIA, in active consultation with the community, adopted a change in its working strategy and process. The thrust was on strengthening people and people's institutions with SCRIA focusing on the issues of self-governance, livelihood and natural resource management with efficiency and effectiveness in facilitation.

Over the years SCRIA also motivated, trained & financially supported many young men & women who were keen to initiate development empowerment in their regions'. They are now successfully working on various development issues in Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Assam. Numerous voluntary groups too have being and are being promoted & assisted by SCRIA.

Selection of outreach Area

SCRIA's districts of outreach are those that are underdeveloped in the region. Initiatives related to governance are spread over all the villages in outreach districts but focused initiatives in livelihood & natural resource management are limited to certain villages only. The selection of villages for focused intervention depends upon the available development opportunities in the village and on the willingness of the community to be active participant in the development process. To determine this a basic village level survey is conducted and at least 4 to 5 village meetings per village. In these meetings vision, mission, initiatives & approach of the organization are explained. If women in the concerned community are willing to participate in the development process SCRIA includes that village in its focused outreach. All the outreach villages have been divided into clusters and initiatives are carried out cluster wise.

People

The social, political and economic realities of the region make it imperative for women to have an equal and a stronger voice in the social - political - economic decision making process. Since 1979 the organization is striving for meaningful involvement of women in this process.

Due consideration is given to women from - landless and marginal

farming families who are involved in subsistence agriculture, do not have any sustainable source of income, are from socially disadvantaged community and are willing to participate in social, political & economic development initiatives. Using various standards of backwardness data and in consultation with concerned women Sangathan [if any] & village community, selection of women or families for tangible benefits is done.

Conscious effort is made to involve men - farmers and youth, from the concerned village communities to lend support in community initiatives. Men are provided an opportunity to "understand & distinguish" the gender inequities that they see everyday and once enlightened most men address this anomaly.

Two major protagonists in village development, the elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions & the electors – gram sabha members are also important outreach constituents of SCRIA.

Organizing Sangathans

For transforming the subjects of development from being passive recipients of development to initiators of the development process SCRIA facilitates the process of women organizing themselves in groups. This process is initiated during initial village meetings. The Sangathans known as Sakriya Sangathan, have on an average 10 to 15 members per Sangathan, all of whom are either elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions' or gram sabha members belonging to different caste and communities residing in the village. Every Sangathan is divided into 5 up-sangathans, sub groups, that focus on social, political, economic empowerment, water sanitation and agriculture livestock issues in their village. All Sangathan members are also members of one of the up-sangathans. The membership in up-sangathans enhances understanding & participation of all members in various development issues at village level. The up-sangathan members shift to another up-sangathan after 2 years. The strategy of up-sangathans in the long run ensures that all the members of the Sangathan are actively involved in some or the other activity and are continually developing their capacity on issues of primary importance in their villages.

Sangathans' in the villages enables women, through group action, to identify their critical problems, prioritize them, avail of opportunities offered by governmental and non governmental agencies & to fight against social evils. Sangathans also act as catalysts in promoting self & inclusive governance in PRIs.

The operational rules governing Sakriya Sangathans have evolved over the years & have been decided upon by members themselves.

Capacity building

Capacity building is facilitated in a holistic way with class room training, back up support systems, institutionalization of mechanisms like

networks, creating enabling environment for greater gender sensitive delivery of services and building multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Post Sangathan formation members undergo 2 days of orientation on the benefits of Sangathan for articulating social, political & economic development issues collectively. Later a four-phase training over a period of one year is facilitated on leadership development, maintaining monthly meeting records, conflict management, income management, bookkeeping, etc.. A mix methodology of group exercises, classroom teaching & games is applied.

For perspective building on issues like inclusive governance, village planning, water harvesting, sanitation, improved agri inputs, livestock management, legal processes and laws affecting women, social issues, etc. workshops, study tour, and development camps are organized. A mix of informative & interactive styles is followed wherein games, group work, street plays, movies, are used regularly.

Apart from trainings, monthly meetings of Sakriya Sangathans are pivotal in capacity building. These village level meetings involve a set agenda of social – political - economic and other development issues. Issues raised by members are also discussed in these meetings. Through these meetings capacity of Sangathan members is strengthened and they are encouraged for possible local initiatives.

Active participation of Sangathan leaders & members in campaigns, Sakriya Sangh - federation of Sangathans', Shakti Parishad – a forum for violence against women and Sakriya Manch – a lateral network of women Sangathans in villages too enhances skill and capacity. This is detailed in the following chapters.

Working with others in outreach region

Other than Sangathan members SCRIA also facilitates elected women representatives, gram sabha members' in general, gram Panchayats, men & youth and civil society organizations in enhancing their capacity and organizing them for participation in development and governance processes.

Women, other than Sangathan members, in the villages who do not want to be part of a structured process but are keen to understand various issues too very often join in the monthly meetings of Sangathans and other local initiatives. While women groups in the villages promoted under various government programs too are outreached through lateral networks like Sakriya Manch. This process is detailed in the chapter titled, "Institutionalizing self help support systems".

Mobilizing Women for Local Initiatives

Empowerment without justice is meaningless for the disadvantaged. Empowerment must lead towards social, political and developmental justice bringing qualitative and quantitative improvement in people's lives. For this to happen the empowered but disadvantaged, people must initiate local action for the desired change. Their actions though must reflect the values of accountability - community ownership and benefit to the deserving that they are themselves demanding from the social, political & developmental systems. SCRIA assists the empowered Sakriya Sangathans in value based local initiatives.

Local initiatives by Sangathans

Group actions in SCRIA's outreach villages are the norm rather than exception. Sangathans work for enhancing women's role in social, political, economic decision-making processes both within the family and in the society. SCRIA too actively promotes women's initiatives in governance and as Sangathan members are from socially and economically disadvantaged communities their livelihood needs too are addressed.

Livelihood

In this semi arid, patriarchic and predominantly agrarian region opportunities for a regular and sustainable source of income for women are a necessity. SCRIA since 1982 has been promoting rural enterprise & entrepreneurship among women and assisting rural craft persons. The livelihood program is known as Samridhi. It trains for entrepreneurship, provides startup loan facility and facilitates fair trade. Sakriya Sangh, the federation of Sakriya Sangathans, has established standard operating guidelines for the program. SCRIA's team does field implementation.

For enabling economic empowerment of its members' Sakriya Sangh is intrinsically involved in the program, it identifies members for availing micro finance, assesses loan needs, ensures loan utilization, maintains financial discipline among members, manages group accounts, provides assistance in enterprise management, allocates funds regionally for different needs and monitors & reviews the program. Where ever available and accessible, funds to Sangathans are processed through banks.

For craft persons SCRIA facilitates design development and fair trade with assistance from Sakriya Sangh. Sangh is responsible for order acceptance, placement for production among craft persons, processing and distribution of raw material, quality control, purchasing of finished products, labeling & packaging, product costing, training of new craft persons, etc.. The products are marketed through "Khorī - Shop". Financial assistance to craft persons too is facilitated.

The intensive involvement of Sakriya Sangh members in economic empowerment program helps in developing decision-making & leadership capacities that greatly assists in their later avatar as social political change makers.

Social, political issues

Sakriya Sangathans are politically enlightened and active women groups ready to participate in governance as informed citizens or enter the system for bringing about a meaningful change. Sangathan members on their own or with other self help support organizations promoted by SCRIA - like Sakriya Sangh, Sakriya Manch, Sakriya Pratinidhi and Shakti Parishad embark on change missions. At times assistance from men, having positive attitude towards women's participation in governance and development issues, is also sought.

Taking reins of local initiatives in their hands Sangathans' motivate, support and ensure participation of elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions and in its functioning. In gram sabhas' too they facilitate meaningful contribution of women gram sabha members ensuring issues affecting women are also discussed in earnest. In cases of violence against women preliminary assistance to victim is offered by Sangathans and cases referred to Shakti Parishad – a council for victims of violence, for resolution. Gender sensitivity in village level development initiatives and public services is also monitored.

Discussions, community meetings, complaints to “decision makers”, negotiations, public demonstrations, rallies for support from general public, memorandum to administration, voluntary labor, press conference and protest march are some of the tools that Sangathan takes recourse to during local initiatives. SCRIA's role in all this is limited to providing appropriate information and networking with appropriate bodies while ensuring that initiatives are within the spirit of law.

Natural resources

Whether it relates to building - renovating a structure for water harvesting, sanitation or some such purpose, or it is about demanding better public utility facility or community ownership of common property or equitable utilization of common resource, Sangathans are intrinsically involved in all local initiatives related to natural resources. They are also instrumental in the revival of traditional structures, systems & community management in water harvesting, agriculture, pasture development, water utilization, etc..

In all the activities facilitated by SCRIA providing tangible benefits to individual families or communities, it is village Sangathans who identify issues for intervention, site, beneficiary families & communities. Sangathans take responsibility for construction & post construction management of structure or system including material purchase, labor management, quality control & financial management of grant and contribution. SCRIA provides technical assistance.

When public services, like water supply, don't function as they should, public functionaries do not carry out their responsibilities responsibly, benefits - schemes meant for public do not reach public, there is inequitable distribution of resources and services, common resources are exploited to benefit few, community ownership is usurped by the unscrupulous, Sangathans protest and initiate action for justice. In their struggle they invite Panchayats, men, youth and others too. Engagement strategies adopted for social, political issues are adopted for natural resources too.

Sustainability, ownership & accountability

SCRIA strives for community ownership and management of the programs. Without the knowledge, approval and involvement of Sakriya Sangh, Sangathans' and community no initiative is facilitated or supported by SCRIA. As mentioned earlier, the demand for desired change of accountability - community ownership - benefit to the deserving from existing social, political & developmental systems must reflect in the actions of those demanding it. Hence the desired values have been embedded in SCRIA's initiatives that reflect in its everyday functioning.

Cost sharing

Sustainability, commitment and ownership in initiatives are fortified by cost sharing, which also leads to accountability & probity in work. SCRIA gives high priority to cost sharing of programs and does not provide 100% of cost. In activities offering tangible physical benefit to community 40% of the cost is mobilized as contribution from the concerned community in cash or kind while 50% or more for those benefiting individual families. In many instances loans are provided to families for facilities like housing, sanitation, water harvesting and education.

For effective post program management of the developed structures or systems Sakriya Sangathans' manage a maintenance fund known as Sampada Prakritik Kosh. The funds for Kosh are raised from donations from the village.

In activities offering intangible benefits, like capacity building, SCRIA & Sangathans share the cost of conducting trainings and workshops. Normally the participants or Sangathans share the cost of travel, facilities at venue - if it is not in SCRIA's premises, and training materials.

Social audit

Social audit of SCRIA's programs are organized during the yearly general body meeting of Sakriya Sangh. These are held in all the districts of outreach and are open to all members of Sakriya Sangathans, self help support groups facilitated by SCRIA and others interested in the process. The audit entails sharing of all physical and financial details about programs and activities undertaken in the past year. SCRIA's team provides break-up of all costs and expenses, including administration cost. Apart from ensuring transparency in

SCRIA's functioning social audit makes outreach people meaningful stakeholders in development initiatives and get motivated to demand accountability in other development initiatives in their villages, districts & state.

Transparency file

The principal of social audit is applied at village level also especially in infrastructure related work supported by SCRIA in villages. For every structure constructed or renovated concerned Sakriya Sangathans maintain a village level record called 'Transparency File'. This contains all construction and financial details specific to the initiative such as work proposal, construction plans, time frame for work, no objection certificate from Panchayat, total cost involved, details of grant amount & community contribution, material costs, expenses incurred, vouchers, copies of muster rolls, completion certificate, etc.. Wherever banks are accessible, SCRIA processes funds to Sangathans through them while Sangathan directly pays for work done to the concerned people with the knowledge & approval of all its members.

Details of maintenance fund for the upkeep and management of the constructed asset are also documented in this file. Significantly, Sangathan members verbally present these details during Gram Sabha in which the file is physically available for scrutiny by any village resident. Making the process of management decentralized and transparent creates a sense of responsibility & accountability about development initiatives as it also eliminates pilfering and mismanagement of finances, a common complaint against public works.

Community feedback

Community feedback about its initiatives and team is significant for SCRIA as it enables it to monitor the success of initiatives undertaken and make changes in initiatives or implementation style where necessary. Apart from the institutionalised self help structures by which monitoring and feedback occurs on a regular basis feedback is encouraged from informal sources like volunteers associated with specific activities, interaction with people during campaigns, feedback questionnaires distributed among public during campaigns and meetings, tele helpline, etc.. SCRIA is meticulous about responding quickly to feedback as it strengthens the initiative and sends a strong signal to the community that their opinions matter.

Community volunteers

A significant share of success in SCRIA's various initiatives could be attributed to the people who partner as volunteers with SCRIA. School children, youth, women and farmers come forward and willingly volunteer for community initiatives. Participation by volunteers in an initiative results in cost sharing that leads to its sustainability, ownership by community and increased accountability. SCRIA gratefully acknowledges the support of more than 11000 voluntary community volunteers without whose selfless devotion the mission would be incomplete.

Sangathans' role in shaping organization's strategy and initiatives

As mentioned throughout this document Sangathans and their federation, Sakriya Sangh are embedded in SCRIA's decision-making process and lead various initiatives. All major decisions like issues for intervention, strategy for implementation, outreach and continuation of initiatives without SCRIA's active support are determined by Sangathans'. Their role is of an initiator and not that of a participant. Efforts are on to increase this role further.

Facilitating Enabling Environment

Social, political and developmental justice for the disadvantaged requires an attitudinal change in the ideology of the dominant group in the society. No amount of capacity building, skill development and strengthening of women organizations' alone will make much of a difference until the players in the surrounding social, political & developmental systems too are willing for the difference. For this change to be peaceful and non-violent it is absolutely necessary that the group targeted for change must be geared & primed for desired alteration and modification. SCRIA is committed to facilitate an enabling environment for social, political and developmental justice for the disadvantaged.

Including all

In a deeply conservative and patriarchal, outreach region opposition to women empowerment initiatives often comes from the family while efforts in accountable governance and transparent implementation of development initiatives is opposed by entrenched vested interests in the implementing system. To overcome these hostilities SCRIA employs diverse strategies that nullify resentment from the majority though at times it does not insulate organization or its team from the hostility of a miniscule minority. But this is an expected reaction in a situation where the center of decision-making power shifts from few to many.

"Including all" is the bedrock strategy for creating an enabling environment. This starts right from the time when introductory meetings are organized in the villages. In these meetings itself men & women alike are explained about women centric aspect of SCRIA's vision, mission, initiatives, strategies and processes. Men are invited to join in or support the process. Gender sensitization programs are also regularly facilitated in the villages.

Once women groups are formed male relatives of group members are invited to attend a Sangathan meeting to understand themselves the dynamics of such an initiative. Men - farmers and youth too are motivated to organize themselves into Sangathans whose capacity building is facilitated by SCRIA. Interest free scholarship loans are provided to youth for completing school education or for pursuing higher education. This involves intensive interaction of youth with women Sangathans and SCRIA's team providing them with an insight & perception of social inclusiveness. Sensitized these men and youth, attuned to SCRIA's philosophy and objectives, are able to initiate a dialogue with resisting men in the same village, thus making it extremely hard for dismissive attitudes being adopted.

SCRIA also works extensively with all in gram panchayats & gram sabha and at times assists communities with a much-needed facility, like primary school, which they themselves are unable to facilitate.

Moreover as nearly eighty percent of SCRIA's team is from the region knowledge of local dialect and of local customs - traditions makes rural communities less hostile and suspicious during interaction.

Abhiyaan - Campaigns

Campaigns are effective for reaching out to a large number of people. For the past many years SCRIA's team and volunteers - Sangathan members, youth, farmers from outreach areas, have been constantly devising innovative strategies to reach out to as many people as possible in an effective and efficient manner. This process of community consultation leads to a greater sense of involvement from all stakeholders as also the emergence of local activists and leaders who can be involved as partners to spearhead campaigns locally.

Campaigns are facilitated in various formats and on various issues for sensitizing & mobilizing citizens'. Rallies on foot or on bicycles, street corner meetings, songs, street plays, submitting of memorandum to administration for pertinent action, street side information booths, village level information camps, information chariots [auto rickshaws, jeeps, tractors & camel carts equipped with loudspeakers that play out a taped message], information sessions with people on streets - in jeeps - busses - trains, distribution of posters - handbills - booklets and information broadcasting through local cable television networks are some of the diverse tactics employed.

Campaigns are mainly organized in villages though places where public from rural areas congregates in large numbers like bus stands, railway stations, markets, major crossroads and towns of outreach districts too are focused upon. Volunteers and their selfless devotion is significant in making campaigns a successful strategy.

Interface, dialogues

Citizens' forum facilitated by SCRIA like Sakriya Sangathans, Sakriya Manch, Sakriya Pratinidhi and Shakti Parishad are encouraged and supported for initiating and organizing block, district and regional level interface or dialogue among various stakeholders of development. SCRIA too organizes such discourses that provide a unique opportunity to village residents for a lively interface with those who are responsible for providing - facilitating services & initiatives in the villages.

Lateral interface & networking

Celebration of women's day; national - state self-governance days and environment day emphasizes the importance of the issue in our lives and provides an opportunity to reflect on it. The celebration also provides a unique opportunity to women from villages to interact with others in the region establishing meaningful linkages on similar issues. Many participants are also motivated to see many others like them who are claiming their just position in the society. At SCRIA these events are fully managed by women leaders - they plan the event, organize volunteers, manage activities & take care of logistics.

Publications

Over the years SCRIA has been bringing out various publications for awareness, motivation, information dissemination & for highlighting best practices. The publications are in audio, video & print format and include books, booklets, handbills, posters, messages, newsletter, films and reports.

Tele helpline

A telephone helpline for issues related to inclusive and accountable governance was started in 2005. Since then tele help line is working on every working day during office hours though people from both rural and urban areas call up with their queries on all days and at all waking hours.

Linkages w/ other institutions, organizations, etc.

With the objective of a greater impact for meaningful policy influence and advocacy SCRIA is actively involved in networking and alliance building with like minded organizations, groups, federations and intellectuals within the region as well as at national level on primary issues like water, governance and livelihood.

Within SCRIA

To keep up with the challenges of an ever-evolving social, political and developmental dynamics SCRIA strives for a comprehensive capacity development of its team. Regular training is embedded in every program and is reviewed periodically. Otherwise too capacity enhancement is an ongoing process with frequent ideating sessions & open discussions.

SCRIA's team attends numerous national & international meetings, workshops, seminars and training programs related to alternate energy, citizen's rights, environment, micro enterprise development, micro credit, soil water conservation, gender issues, governance, livelihood, education, organizational accounting etc..

Institutionalizing Self Help Support Systems

For systemic changes in governance and to influence public attitude for it, organized efforts and actions over a period of time are required. Such efforts are called advocacy whereby citizen advocates gain access and voice in the decision making of relevant institutions. To promote advocacy for social, political and developmental justice SCRIA has institutionalized self help systems, which it supports in the form of capacity building; the members themselves manage these support systems. More on these systems follows.

Sakriya Sangh

All initiatives of SCRIA are facilitated through a decentralized decision making process wherein Sakriya Sangathan members are involved in policy and implementation decisions through a three tier federating structure, at village - block - district level, called Sakriya Sangh.

Sangathan is a primary village level unit of federation that is headed by an Adhyaksha, leader. Sangathan is a basic self-help support unit for its members and others in the village. All Sangathan members are members of Aam Sabha, general body, that meets once a year on October 17. Aam Sabha in its yearly general body meeting ratifies the executive decisions taken by the apex-federating unit, Samiti.

The cluster level federating unit is Sangh & includes all Adhyakshas' of all the Sangathans in the cluster. Sangh members meet once in two months and review implementation of programs in cluster; finalize funding allocation to Sangathans & its subsequent disbursement; oversee financial discipline among Sangathans, assist in conflict management and plan collective initiatives.

At district level the federating unit is called Nirnaayak Samiti and is represented by 1/3 members from every Sangh that are elected during Aam Sabha. The Samiti meets once in 3 months and is responsible for finalizing district level initiatives. All decisions regarding the management and implementation of governance & livelihood programs like make, add, delete rules for programs; decide on issues related to funding, funding partners and related matters; finalize funding allocation to all clusters; finalize initiatives for action; etc. are taken by the Samitis.

Shakti Parishad

Braving the odds out, in 1997 a group of eleven women leaders from different villages of outreach got together for helping women victims of violence fight for justice. After a year of commendable initiatives in the community the group adopted a formal approach and named itself Shakti Parishad. The members help women in the region who are victims of domestic or gender violence, social intolerance, economic injustice etc.. The Parishad gets into action once a victim or her relatives request for Parishad's assistance. The members act as a pressure group and do the needful to secure immediate relief and justice for the victim. They lobby with the pertinent administrative bodies, legal offices,

social and political institutions. SCRIA provides supportive services to the Parishad. It also facilitates specialized training for members on legal issues, acts of law affecting women like dowry, marriage, divorce, maintenance, rape, domestic violence etc., legal process & procedures and role of Panchayat & various government agencies involved in the legal processes.

To financially assist victims of injustice or violence the group has initiated a fund called Shakti Kosh. Donations from SCRIA's staff, women motivators & volunteers and others who believe in the cause have made this Kosh possible. The group has evolved norms to manage the fund and is responsible for its upkeep. The Parishad members meet once in two months. During these meetings apart from comparing notes on various instances of injustice against women a discussion on various legal issues is also facilitated.

Sakriya Manch

There being no active federations or networks in SCRIA's outreach other than the one facilitated by SCRIA for its Sangathans, SCRIA focused towards networking Sakriya Sangathans with women groups promoted through various government programs in the villages. This initiative for intra village networking among women's groups is called Sakriya Manch, literally meaning active platform. The Manch identifies critical issues related to women, development & governance in their respective villages, forms a strategy to deal with it and takes action. The issues vary from organizing gram sabhas', participation of women in gram sabha & gram Panchayat, availability & usage of drinking water, sanitation, education, functioning of Public Distribution System, ban on spurious liquor and physical – social violence against women. Regular capacity building of Sakriya Manch members is facilitated, especially for non Sakriya Sangathan members.

Sakriya Pratinidhi

Elected women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions' eager to improve development status of villages and fulfill the development ambitions of its electorate have formed themselves into a group called Sakriya Pratinidhi, active representative. This group primarily focuses on hurdles faced by women representatives in a society where patriarchic values dominate. The group helps its members in discharging their responsibilities lawfully & meaningfully. It acts as a monitoring group for inclusiveness in village governance, various public services and systems at village level and as a pressure & lobbying group on various issues with administration and other civil and legal bodies.

Similarly some gram Panchayats have formed a network called Sakriya Panchayat. They too prioritize common issues for development and work collectively on it helping each other as and when required. Sakriya Panchayats also work towards inclusive & accountable governance in their villages.

SCRIA facilitates skill and capacity building of these elected representatives.

Continuing Partnership with SCRIA

In an ever-evolving society social, political, economic and developmental challenges too evolve continuously. To meet these challenges appropriately & effectively SCRIA diligently continues its partnership with the socially, politically and economically disadvantaged in rural areas and facilitates more people from more villages in the region for participation in the governance processes of the country, in the management of natural resources - livestock - agriculture and in availing livelihood opportunities.

As explained earlier, SCRIA strives for community ownership and management of the programs and have embedded systems & structures for institutional & financial sustainability of the initiated process. Through participatory approach not only responsibility is shared with outreach group but an opportunity is facilitated for the outreach community to develop appropriate skills, capacity and confidence to plan, implement, monitor and sustain the initiative to the best of their ability.

The institutionalized self-help support systems are institutionally & financially self-sustaining. SCRIA continues to strengthen them, foster networking and linkages and provide capacity building opportunities. It also regularly facilitates monthly meetings of Sakriya Sangathans, quarterly meetings of Shakti Parishad, Sakriya Manch & Sakriya Pratinidhi. Encouraging women to participate in decision-making process of governance, meeting their basic livelihood needs and reviving traditional natural resources management system requires a certain level of intensive support to move forward in a tangible way for which SCRIA partners with similar objective organizations.

SCRIA is committed to support sincere efforts and initiatives of individuals, groups and civil society organizations for people's involvement in social, political, economic and developmental systems through information, knowledge, technology, experience sharing, management, financial or personnel assistance.

Glossary

Aam Sabha	General body meeting of Sakriya Sangh
Abhiyaan	Campaign
Adhyaksha	Group leader; chairperson
Cluster	Villages grouped together
Manch	Literally meaning a platform in Hindi
Gram Panchayat	Village Council – a constitutional body at village level for village governance; its members are elected for a period of 5 years
Gram Sabha	A primary unit of self governance in the villages comprising of all residents
Nirnayak Samiti	A district level representative body at the apex of Sakriya Sangh
Panchayat	Gram Panchayat in short but the term is also used for informal councils of homogenous social groups
Panchayati Raj Institutions	A three tier body for self governance at village, block & district level
PIM	Participatory impact monitoring
Samiti	Nirnayak Samiti in short
Sangh	Cluster level federating unit of Sakriya Sangh
Sakriya Manch	Intra village network of women groups; literally meaning active platform
Sakriya Panchayat	Gram Panchayats working actively for inclusive & accountable governance
Sakriya Pratinidhi	Active elected representative of people
Sakriya Sangh	District level federating body of women groups
Sakriya Sangathans	Women groups promoted by SCRIA
Sampada Prakritik	SCRIA's program for management of natural resources
Samridhi	SCRIA's program for livelihood support; literally means prosperity
Sangathans	Groups
SCRIA	Social Centre for Rural Initiative & Advancement
Shakti Kosh	A fund to financially assist women victims of violence; fund is managed by Shakti Parishad
Shakti Parishad	Group of women leaders helping women victims of violence fight for justice
Social Audit	Physical & financial audit of initiatives by community
Svashasan	SCRIA's program on self governance
Tele helpline	A telephone helpline for self governance related issues
Up - sangathans	Sub groups within the main group

SCRIA at a glance

Vision

Sustainable rural development by rural communities

Mission

Building capacities of rural communities for their active and meaningful participation in self governance processes

Outreach

Villages in the districts of
Rewari, Mohindergarh, Jhajjar, Gurgaon in southern Haryana
and Alwar, Bikaner, Churu in northern Rajasthan in north west India

Development initiatives

***Svashaasan* Self Governance**

Women *sangathans* for social & economic justice

Women in self-governance processes

Men & youth mobilization for good governance & social change

***Samridhi* Prosperity**

Promotion of rural entrepreneur & crafts person

Micro finance program

Fair trade

***Sampada Prakritik* Natural Resources**

Water harvesting

Soil conservation

Vegetation - plantation & regeneration

Alternate energy - extension & research

Partners in progress

★ 11000 volunteers in 730 villages ★ Asahi India ★ Australian High Commission
★ British High Commission ★ Canadian High Commission ★ Canadian Hunger
Foundation ★ CAPART ★ Canadian International Development Agency
★ Department of Science & Technology ★ District Rural Development Agency
★ CTM- Italy ★ Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany ★ Embassy of Japan
★ Embassy of Sweden ★ European Union ★ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung ★ German
Agro Action ★ GTZ ★ Habitat for Humanity International ★ Helpage ★ Indian
Council for Agricultural Research ★ Indo Global Social Service Society ★ Industrial
Development Bank of India ★ Ministry of Environment & Forest ★ Ministry of Non
Conventional Energy Sources ★ Ministry of Panchayati Raj ★ Ministry of Rural
Development ★ Misereor ★ NABARD ★ One Village - U.K. ★ Oxfam - U.K.
Rashtriya Mahila Kosh ★ Rotary India Water Conservation Trust ★ Royal
Norwegian Embassy ★ Small Industries Development Bank of India ★ Solidar'
Monde ★ Swedish International Development Agency ★ UNDP ★ Youthreach



Until any society stands up united against injustice or bad governance and takes action for justice, social - political - economic, no amount of development initiatives will take that society far or make development initiatives sustainable in the long run