



CIVIL SOCIETY, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Civil Society, Governance and Human Rights (CSGHR) evolved as a separate portfolio with a pan-India focus as an outcome of the Strategic Plan exercise that was undertaken. A total of 22 projects slotted under the Social Development Initiatives portfolio until the previous year were combined to create this portfolio following the strategic planning exercise. More than 20 new projects have been added to the portfolio during the year 2007-2008. Thus this newly-built portfolio has 48 projects at present. The thrust areas identified within the CSGHR portfolio as outlined in the strategic plan are:

- **Strengthening Governance:** The portfolio will specifically focus on improving the implementation of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution and Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) to ensure functional democracy.
- **Protection of Basic Human Rights:** Support would be provided towards creating an environment in which basic human rights are protected for the most marginalized communities.
- **Strengthening Civil Society:** Most of the backward areas are not only characterized by poor outreach of basic services, but also a lack of presence of civil society organizations. The portfolio recognizes this need and will support initiatives that will build the capacities of civil society organizations to respond to the complexities of poverty and promote rights of the people. The portfolio will in a variety of ways seek to professionalize rights-based work through research, advocacy, documentation and dissemination of relevant materials and also engage with government as well as non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the institutional actors such as the police and judiciary. Governance of civil society organizations will be developed as a significant focus area.

The program team translated these guidelines and identified various innovative interventions across the country. The projects that were supported in the three main thrust areas were as follows:

Strengthening Governance

The focus remained on the grassroots governance in the remote areas of India with emphasis on principles of accountability, transparency and participation of the most marginalized communities in governance.

Several field organizations provide training to the vast number of men and women elected to the gram panchayats, in order that they may better understand how to use the legitimate power that they have gained out of an electoral process to ensure better governance at the village level. Each organization has chosen a specific field for capacity building such as Association for Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) and Mahila Haat, both from New Delhi, who are working on interventions of panchayat-level micro-planning and implementation in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Uttarakhand respectively. In Gujarat, a network of organizations has been working towards the formation of a platform of elected women at the block and district level to strengthen their roles. Although the 73rd Amendment applies to the entire country, there have been further amendments to respond to the special needs of tribal populations. Projects have been supported in the tribal-dominated areas of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, UP and Orissa to activate and strengthen the gram sabha on the provisions of PESA. The projects have specifically focused on raising the participation of Primitive Tribe groups in governance.

An innovative project of Democracy Connect focuses on the Members of Parliament (MP) and exploring possibilities of creating space for formal and regular interaction between panchayat representatives and MPs.



Home visit to build awareness on child marriage, conducted by the project staff of Nishtha in West Bengal

Securing Basic Rights

The portfolio of CSGHR has also focused on securing the rights of marginalized communities in the most deprived areas of the poorer states of India. The portfolio responds to appeals that seek to restore and protect the rights of women, Dalits, tribals, homeless, prisoners and basic entitlements of the vulnerable communities. It is found that human rights violations are most rampant among the relatively poorer states. Food insecurity among the poor despite overall economic growth of the country remains a serious problem for the country. In the past few years, a public interest litigation filed by a few organizations have yielded very supportive orders by the Supreme Court that have strengthened the hands of the rural poor and the civil society organizations working in these areas. These orders have played a significant role in streamlining the Public Distribution System — the major source of grain for the poor. Armed with these orders, the poor and civil society organizations are working towards ensuring the basic right to food. While support to six organizations in Madhya Pradesh on securing the right to food continues, this year Baihar Nari Utthan Sewa Mahila Mandal has been supported for ensuring the right to food among the primitive Baiga tribe in Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh. The strategy includes strengthening traditional organizations among them and establishing participation rights in PRI. Choupal combines its strategy of working on the right to food with the right to public health services to improve the conditions of the poor in Chhattisgarh.

One of the interesting things about rights is that when its denial becomes apparent only then would you seek justice for the denial. Thus the important thing while working on human rights is to be able to track the violations as the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), New Delhi does by providing tool kits to grassroots organizations and CSOs to track and prevent violations of housing and land rights. For the poor a house is not just a shelter, it also doubles up as an important component of their livelihood strategy. Improper records of land and poor updating of inheritance records on death of the land holder create the conditions for taking away land rights. Returning and securing land rights are therefore important civil society interventions.

Even in this day and age, patriarchy and poverty create conditions for persistence of age-old customs in defiance of the law such as child marriage. Nishtha in West Bengal has been supported for the prevention of child marriages in Mograhat II block of West Bengal. The strategies combine tracking ‘at risk’ girls in the age group of 11 to 18 and engaging with them in skill building, helping them get back into mainstream education, engaging with their parents and working with the community in campaign mode.

Violence against women is a widespread phenomenon despite legislation protecting women against it. Counselling and guidance centres are required to ensure that women in distress get the desired support. Nine Mahila Salah Evam Suraksha Kendras — women’s



Micro-planning and awareness building by Mahila Haat in Uttarakhand



Baghelkhand Adivasi Kissan Mazdoor Mukti Morcha supported by SRUTI mobilizing the tribals and Dalits of Maghavan block, Satna district in Madhya Pradesh

counselling centres in nine districts of Rajasthan — provide support to women facing violence through a grant to Vishakha.

The Trusts have for a long time supported Prayas, Social Work in Criminal Justice, a Field Action Project of TISS that works to secure prisoners' rights and the rights of the undertrials. Due to the sensitive nature of the work the organization has sought Indian funding as a strategy. While this year another grant was approved, Prayas with more than a decade's experience, will now mentor new interventions in the criminal justice field, which will work towards strengthening the civil society working in this sector. Four other organizations are supported at present for their work with prisoners. Each of these organizations has identified a niche area within the work with prisoners. Whereas Sahyadri Social, Educational and Youth Society, Sahyog Trust and Voluntary Action for Rehabilitation and Development (VARHAD) are supported for their work in Maharashtra, Sudhar is supported for work in prisons in Bhopal, Indore and Hoshangabad. VARHAD is leading the work in the area of parole and furlough.

Strengthening Civil Society

In order to sustain social development initiatives, strengthening civil society is one of the main requirements of this sector and hence is a focus area of this portfolio. While there is an increase in the number of formal institutions offering degree courses in social work, the need far outnumbers the supply. There is a need to

promote organizations that do both meaningful, good quality work in areas of need as well as to promote activists and professionals who will develop strategies to deal with complex phenomena such as poverty. Thus this portfolio will look at strengthening small civil society organizations and promoting fellows to work on specific themes to promote basic rights of the poor and marginalized.

Towards this end, a grant was made to the Supporting Association for Thematic and Holistic Initiatives (SATHI), Faizabad in UP to train organizations from six districts of Eastern and Central UP in good practices for voluntary organizations such as accountability and transparency. These organizations later took part in a self-evaluation exercise to chart the outcomes of the trainings.

Society for Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative (SRUTI), New Delhi received renewal of support from the Trusts. The work in this phase will specifically focus on building women's leadership. Although SRUTI fellows work on the rights of most marginalized communities, they also focus on strengthening civil society and on issues of governance.

While CSGHR has been defined as a separate portfolio this year, besides broad-basing its work on protection and promotion of basic human rights, the portfolio will work towards strengthening governance within civil society as well.



Adharsila Learning Centre set up in Sendhwa, Madhya Pradesh with the help of a SRUTI fellow

BUILDING LEADERSHIP AT THE GRASSROOTS

The key to addressing poverty and enabling sustainable development is by creating a vibrant democracy: a democracy that will empower and equip the citizenry to effectively participate and decide on the course of development and will promote accountability and transparency. The 11th Five Year Plan of India emphasizes the importance of strengthening decentralized democracy and also lays stress on promoting inclusive growth. As the country continues its march towards neo-liberal policies there is recognition in the Plan document, that a large number of people have been left behind without basic development parameters and many in the country are still denied basic constitutional rights.

The belief underlying the carving out of a separate portfolio to focus on Civil Society, Governance and Human Rights (CSGHR) is that by promoting the protection of human rights and good governance, the Trust is contributing to robust citizenship and a well-governed country. The thrust areas within the CSGHR portfolio as per the Strategy Plan are Strengthening Governance, Protection of Basic Human Rights and Strengthening Civil Society. A crucial element that cuts across all three areas is building grassroots leadership.

In normal course, the word 'leadership' conjures up images of powerful men and women who influence the way decisions are taken, what other people can do or cannot do and how resources can be spent. The leaders are also seen as belonging to an elite class who enjoy certain privileges.

Quite contrary to these images, there are other kinds of leadership — the grassroots leaders. The men and women typically are from far less privileged backgrounds, but they are also powerful as they are able to influence others in

their community and seek to influence those decisions that affect their survival and livelihoods. These leaders do not necessarily occupy formal elected posts, but represent the collective concerns of the poor and marginalized communities.

Nurturing grassroots leadership is intimately linked with marginalized communities being organized through a process of awareness and collective action. Voluntary organizations, community-based organizations and people's organizations identify potential leaders and evolve innovative methods to enhance their abilities to draw support from the communities and seek accountability from the state. A significant aspect of grassroots leadership is their relationship with the people they represent. Their leadership qualities become apparent due to their ability to draw on the training inputs received from organizations and due to their ability to strategize innovatively on collective action. Their efforts lead to better access to schemes formulated for them and expand the possibilities of their participation in the policy formulation and proposed amendments. In this process, it is not just the leader but also the collective that makes all the difference.

Some of the innovative ways through which the organizations covered in this portfolio have contributed to grassroots leadership are presented below:

Choupal Gramin Vikas Prashikshan Evam Shodh Sansthan, Chhattisgarh is a unique project spread over six districts of Northern and Central Chhattisgarh. It is a federation of four people's organizations working with the issues of the most marginalized sections of Dalits, Primitive Tribe groups and tribes of the area. The strategies include building people's leadership and strengthening grassroots people's

organizations in about 700 villages. Mitanins, or community health workers (voluntary), form the front line leadership of the Adivasi Adhikar Samiti, one of the constituents of Choupal. They have been at the forefront of exposing PDS irregularities as well as in saving forests from felling in the area. The spontaneous reaction of the women of the area against large-scale forest felling could be translated into a greater action that saved 40,000 ha of forest land.

Mitanins around Manendragarh in Koriya district of north Chhattisgarh have earned a reputation for supporting fellow community members in accessing health services at the government run facilities. The women of these areas are strident and forthcoming today and are ready to overcome the obstacles that may come their way while claiming their right to food and health. Their strength comes from the support they enjoy from a vibrant community aware of its rights that is spread across several villages.

The community organization, has acted both as a process as well as an end. It has been used on the one hand, as a method through which the marginalized communities are striving to achieve their goals. On the other hand, people from these communities are also using the community organization to establish and assert their identity as a collective to fight the exploitative forces.

Building Women's Leadership in Eastern Uttar Pradesh: Six organizations have been supported in Varanasi, Mau, Ghazipur, Pratapgarh, Ambedkarnagar and Ajamgarh under the technical support of People's Action for National Integration (PANI), Faizabad. The organizations were already engaged in building Self Help Groups. They were also engaged in the training of elected women representatives in the area and found that in the extreme feudal society of Eastern Uttar Pradesh it was futile to train and expose women on issues of their rights if they were not helped with structures that would provide crucial support on a long-term basis, for them to claim these rights.

In the present project, thus, the strategy adopted is to federate the SHGs (nari sanghs) with the aim of maximizing women's participation in the economic (at home) and socio-political decision making (at the village community or panchayat level). The uniqueness of the project lies in the fact that the women are not only being made aware of their rights and duties, but in the form of nari sanghs, a platform is also being created to put into effect their new found knowledge. For instance, 67 women from Babrhi village of Ghazipur Sadar block of Uttar Pradesh, came forward to file applications for work under the NREGA. As in many instances across the country, the local authorities did not respond to their applications. The women — armed with information on the NREGA — decided to pursue the matter with the local authorities and received their job cards after relentlessly making visits and representations to various officers for more than two months.

Society for Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative (SRUTI), New Delhi has a long history of supporting development of leadership among the most marginalized communities in remote rural and tribal areas of the country. In the present phase of the project, SRUTI is concentrating on building leadership among women in the communities that SRUTI fellows work with. B Sunanda, a SRUTI fellow, from the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh has organized Dalit and Adivasi landless labourers in four mandals of Chittor district into the Chittor Jilla Vyavasyay Kulil Union and is working towards maximizing the benefits of the NREGA to them. Ankuran's project aims at strengthening leadership skills among 1,400 women and men from the Kondha tribe in 10 blocks of Orissa in order to activate the gram sabha in this Fifth Schedule area, which is governed by the rules of Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA). These leaders will help the community in using the Right to Information Act as a tool of securing participation in local self governance and ensuring holistic development.



Women at the forefront of democracy



Marginalized groups making their voices heard in Ambedkarnagar, Uttar Pradesh



Women leaders create their own forums to seek improvements in the government health and food programs in Koriya district, Chhattisgarh



Taking strides towards assertive grassroots leadership



Tribal women assert their rights through the Adivasi Adhikar Samiti in Chhattisgarh



Bringing in grassroots wisdom to governance



Secure savings and credit build women's confidence at home and in the community



Seeking redressal from the authorities with the help of Choupal in Koriya, Chhattisgarh

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Name of Grantee	Sanction Amount	Disbursed 2007-08
	Rupees in Million	
Sir Dorabji Tata Trust		
1 Area Networking and Development Initiatives (ANANDI), Gujarat - Towards the Corpus and Program Grant to make the organization self-sustainable in implementing its five-year expansion plan and empowerment of marginalized women through various strategies.	23.30	3.30
2 Association for Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD), New Delhi - Towards planned participatory employment generation and poverty reduction through panchayats in Naugarh block, Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh.	7.08	2.13
3 Baihar Nari Utthan Sewa Mahila Mandal, Madhya Pradesh - Towards participatory development of Baiga tribals through community action with special emphasis on the right to food and participation in Panchayati Raj.	1.62	0.86
4 Bal Sakha, Bihar - Towards developing a model for bringing about systemic changes in the delivery of juvenile justice in Jharkhand and to develop community based child protection programs in the State.	3.56	1.30
5 Coastal Rural Youth Network (CRY-Net), Andhra Pradesh - Towards fellowship support to 10 community organizations which form a part of CRY-Net and administrative expenses of their co-ordinate office in Visakhapatnam.	13.10	4.22
6 Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi - Towards contributing to the cause of improving governmental accountability and the quality of governance in general; and in the prison and RTI sectors in particular.	46.40	5.00
7 Choupal Gramin Vikas Prashikshan Evam Shodh Sansthan, Chhattisgarh - Towards building and strengthening peoples institutions to access and influence state run food and health programs in tribal regions of Chhattisgarh.	9.76	3.18
8 Gram Sudhar Samiti, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	3.40	1.10
9 Holistic Action Research and Development, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	2.30	0.70
10 Jana Sanskriti, West Bengal - Towards promotion of human rights committees and learning centres for women and pre-school children.	7.28	0.50
11 Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, Gujarat - Towards a Corpus Grant and Program Grant. The Corpus Grant is towards making the organization self-sustainable. The Program Grant is to be used towards strengthening the rural mahila sangathans into autonomous people's institutions.	58.35	1.45
12 Nirman, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	2.50	0.80
13 Parhit Samaj Sevi Sanstha, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	3.40	1.10
14 Sahyog Trust, Maharashtra - Towards the intervention in criminal justice in the central prisons of Pune, Kolhapur and Nagpur and building a lawyers' network in these districts of Maharashtra.	2.69	0.65
15 Saiyere Jo Sangathan, Gujarat - Towards program activities of the sangathan to work on issues like ecological restoration, handicrafts, health and micro-credit for women in the Nakhatrana region of Kutch.	4.00	0.70
16 Sambhav Social Service Organisation, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	3.80	1.20
17 Shramajivee Mahila Samity, West Bengal - Towards documentation and the research training program for vigilance groups, advocacy with government alliance building, legal expenses and action.	5.90	0.90

Name of Grantee	Sanction Amount	Disbursed 2007-08
	Rupees in Million	
18 Shree Navsarjan Kelawani Mandal, Gujarat - Towards meeting capital, training and capacity building costs, administrative and documentation costs, and maintaining a revolving fund.	2.70	0.43
19 Society for Rural, Urban and Tribal Initiative (SRUTI), New Delhi - Towards the fellowship program, the Centre for Advocacy and Learnings and resource mobilization.	31.90	10.05
20 Social Action for Human Resource Development (SOHARD), Rajasthan - Towards setting up the Rural Training and Resource Centre as well as for work in promoting local self-governance and empowering women in grassroots politics.	4.90	1.15
21 Socio Legal Information Centre (SLIC), Maharashtra - Towards consolidating their work in Maharashtra and supporting similar work in other states — Orissa and West Bengal in the first year; Andhra Pradesh and Kerala in the second year; Goa and Gujarat in the third year.	14.20	4.80
22 Spandan Samaj Seva Samiti, Madhya Pradesh - Towards further strengthening the work on the Right to Food issues.	3.40	1.05
23 Ujjas Mahila Sangathan, Gujarat - Towards program activities of the sangathan to work on issues like social justice, micro-credit, environmental issues and empowering women through Panchayati Raj Institutions.	4.30	0.75
24 Urmul Jyoti Sansthan, Rajasthan - Towards making local government accountable in the Nokha block of Bikaner, Rajasthan.	2.10	0.63
25 Voluntary Action for Rehabilitation and Development (VARHAD), Maharashtra - Towards consolidating its work in Amravati Central Prison and expanding its services to Yeotmal, Akola and Wardha district prisons with an emphasis on networking and advocacy.	12.57	3.98
Small Grants		
1 Aangan Trust, Maharashtra - Towards facilitating the implementation of policy level systemic changes across children's institutions in Maharashtra.	0.50	0.50
2 AGNI, Maharashtra - Towards the cost of the book "Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and Ward Administration" for distribution to NGOs.	0.03	0.03
3 Bhagwan Manav Kalyan Samiti, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in five panchayats.	0.35	0.35
4 Democracy Connect, New Delhi - Towards a feasibility study titled, Constituency Connect: To explore the creation and facilitation of a platform for regular interaction between Members of Parliament and Panchayati Raj Institutions/Urban Local Bodies.	0.50	0.50
5 Gram Vikas Sewa Sansthan, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in 10 panchayats.	0.44	0.44
6 Grameen Vikas Sansthan, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in 10 panchayats.	0.40	0.40
7 Gramin Punar Nirman Sansthan, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in 10 panchayats.	0.40	0.40
8 Little Sisters of the Poor, West Bengal - Towards renovation of their Home.	0.10	0.10
9 Lok Jagriti Sansthan, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in five panchayats.	0.35	0.35
10 Mahila Haat, New Delhi - Towards strengthening gram panchayats through an awareness generation program and micro-planning training.	0.50	0.50
11 Mahila Swarojgar Samiti, Uttar Pradesh - Towards empowering rural women by building community based organizations in five gram panchayats.	0.31	0.31
12 People's Action for National Integration (PANI), Uttar Pradesh - Towards providing technical support to the organization and towards achieving the project objectives in 45 gram panchayats.	0.48	0.48

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	Rupees in Million	
13 Peoples Action for People in Need, Himachal Pradesh - Towards capacity building of the organization in awareness generation, imparting trainings to CBOs and dissemination of information at the grassroots level.	0.10	0.10
14 Prajwala Sangham, Andhra Pradesh - Towards their activities for the program on Safai Karmachari Andolan.	0.49	0.49
15 Sahyadri Social, Educational and Youth Society, Maharashtra - Towards consolidating the work in Solapur, Maharashtra among the prisoners and juveniles in conflict with law.	0.50	0.50
16 Sethna's Scouting Society, Maharashtra - Towards their training camp.	0.08	0.08
17 Swaraj Peeth Trust, New Delhi - Towards systematizing the work of building community peacekeeping volunteers in four districts - Saharanpur, Bijnor, Biharigarh and Rampur of Uttar Pradesh.	0.33	0.33
18 Tarashi Mahila Shodh Evam Prashikshan Sanstha, Madhya Pradesh - Towards empowering the panchayats through training of gram sabhas in 10 panchayats of Jhabua and Khargone districts of Madhya Pradesh.	0.47	0.47
19 Vishakha Mahila Shiksha Evam Shodh Samiti, Rajasthan - Towards strengthening the case work and local action against violence against women through Mahila Salah Evam Suraksha Kendras.	0.48	0.48
	281.32	58.74
Jamsetji Tata Trust		
1 Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), Gujarat - Towards establishment of a centre for research and training on issues facing NGOs.	7.13	7.13
	7.13	7.13
RD Tata Trust		
1 Nishtha, West Bengal - Towards the Adolescents' Demands for All Rights through Innovative and Nurturing Initiatives (ADARINI) project.	26.00	5.52
	26.00	5.52
Tata Education Trust		
1 Housing and Land Rights Network, New Delhi - Towards promoting human rights to adequate housing and land in India.	17.01	5.49
	17.01	5.49
JRD Tata Trust		
1 Ankuran, Orissa - Towards participatory development of 10 blocks in the PESA area of two districts of Orissa.	10.00	1.40
	10.00	1.40
Grand Total	341.46	78.28



Making pathways towards participatory governance in Uttar Pradesh