

Internship at Gayatri Seva Sansthan, Udaipur, Rajasthan

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SUMMARY

The objective of Gayatri Seva Sansthan (GSS) is to provide the quality of life in remote and deprived areas through by capacity building of Human resource & institutions. GSS believe that every individual must be provided with some tools to improve his own situation so that he can contribute in the growth of country in more productive manner. GSS approach of Human and Institutional Development (HID) is to develop competency in individuals, groups and collectives as competency development is the driver of development for any nation. Empowerment and autonomy of women has been one of the most discussed human rights, Women empowerment through capacity building, drudgery reduction, literacy and gender sensitization has always been an integral part of all of GSS's interventions.

ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

Gayatri Seva Sansthan (GSS) is inspired by Gandhian Vision of Gram Swaraj established in October 1986 in Udaipur district of Rajasthan. GSS realized that the only way to bring the marginalized tribal communities of difficult and deprived regions to the mainstream was a multi-dimensional development approach for their sustainable overall upliftment. These are three main pillars of Sustainable and Integrated Development. Quality effort in any one of these areas complements growth simultaneously in the other two and triggers a cycle of sustainability. Thus, over the years, the organization has grown into three major verticals for integrated development of the local tribal population:

1. Human and Institutional Development.
2. Livelihood Enhancement.
3. Natural Resource Management.

Gram swaraj, or village self-rule, was a pivotal concept in Gandhiji's thinking and was the centerpiece of his vision of economic development in India. GSS set out on a mission of providing integrated sustainable livelihood in the tribal subjugated regions of Southern Rajasthan.

The quality of life in remote and deprived areas is majorly dependent on the livelihood prospects in the area, the effective use of natural resources offered by the geography & the capacity building of human resource and institutions. Developmental efforts in any one of these areas complement growth in the other two and trigger a cycle of sustainability. Hence, GSS ensures that each of its interventions contributes to one of these verticals thus moving one step further towards 'Sustainable Integrated Development'.

The organization has been working in different areas such as agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, health care, women empowerment, child protection, management and rehabilitation of natural resources. After 30 years of its determination and dedicated efforts, GSS is now a household name in the far-flung remote tribal hamlets and is greatly appreciated for all its projects.

Men, women, youth and children are all our primary program stakeholders who actively participate in planning & monitoring process of the project within their own groups, hence they are the owners of the change that they bring for the community and in their own life. Alongside the local community, we join hands with civil society, academia, local elected representatives and government bodies to perform effectively in its integrated effort to uplift the quality of life of the weaker sections of people.

OUR REACH

1. 1500 tribal villages of Southern Rajasthan
2. Impelling more than 10,000 hectares of land
3. Three districts of Southern Rajasthan
4. More than 10,000 families

Under Human Institutional Development approach GSS working on empowerment and autonomy of women from the past few years. Yet, continued inequality constantly undermines all efforts towards poverty eradication and sustainable human development. Thus, nearly half of the country's population remains the most disadvantaged segment among the poor, yet it is the women who prove to be most effective in fostering change in their families and communities. Women empowerment through capacity building, drudgery reduction, literacy and gender sensitization has always been an integral part of all of GSS's interventions.

In rural Rajasthan, there is enormous social and cultural inequality between men and women. GSS helps communities transform gender relations by creating ways for women to come together in their individual and collective struggles. 48 women's groups give grassroots leaders the unity, confidence, and authority to redress individual cases of abuse and discrimination. They also work in close partnership with men on the longer process of rewriting biased gender norms and including women within the institutions governing society.

Currently GSS is providing following interventions in target areas:

- Enhancing level of awareness in community towards equality and rights of the girl child.
- 150 SHGs have been formed in tribal dominated region of Udaipur district through which services regarding microfinance, livelihood generation and social development are being provided.

- Facilitating formation of clusters and federations to ensure vibrancy and sustainability of SHGs.
- Capacity building and facilitating market linkage for the SHGs formed by Government Departments and other Agencies.

HUMAN & INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The most important sign of a prosperous nation is the living standard and happiness of its people. We at GSS believe that every individual must be provided with some tools to improve his own situation so that he can contribute in the growth of country in more productive manner. Our approach of Human and Institutional Development (HID) is to develop competency in individuals, groups and collectives as competency development is the driver of development for any nation.

FOR CHILDREN

Protection of Child Rights has always been a major concern for GSS right from the year of its establishment. The organization believes that if we talk about opportunity and social justice for all, it must begin with children as unless the tender plant is properly nourished it has little chance of growing into a useful and strong tree. In the tribal dominated regions of southern Rajasthan, there are a number of villages/habitations where access to the primary education facilities is poor. Due to low literacy levels, lack of awareness and difficult socio-economic conditions the issues related to protection of child rights have never been a priority for the local community. To overcome the situation GSS is providing following interventions in the target areas :

- Providing primary education in most remote and deprived regions through its unique Shikshalaya approach.
- Building capacity of local child protection structures to ensure their efforts are effective.
- Enhancing knowledge and understanding of the community and their local leaders about protection of child rights.
- Creating child friendly environment in the community as well as changing the attitude and behavior of the various stakeholders.

FOR WOMEN

Empowerment and autonomy of women has been one of the most discussed human rights across various national and international platforms over the past few years. Yet, continued inequality constantly undermines all efforts towards poverty eradication and sustainable human development, particularly in rural India. Thus, nearly half of the country's population remains the most disadvantaged segment among the poor, yet it is the women who prove to be most effective in fostering change in their families and communities. Women empowerment through capacity building, drudgery reduction, literacy and gender sensitization has always been an integral part of all of GSS's interventions. Currently GSS is providing following interventions in target areas :

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FOR COMMUNITY & LOCAL INSTITUTION

In rural India, the community and its local level institutions have an important role in planning, execution and governance of developmental work. This is the reason why we are observing that the level of emphasis given on these local structures by the Government and Developmental Agencies in recent years is increasing. If proper orientation, training and hand holding support is provided to these local bodies then these could establish a collaborative partnership in undertaking the responsibility for developing a local "vision" and strategy towards planning, allocating resources, implementing and monitoring of developmental activities that would better cater to the local needs. GSS from its inception has focused on capacity building and strengthening of these local bodies- both formal and informal. The major interventions taken by GSS in this direction are as following :

- Orientation and training programs are being organized for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), local groups, and grass root level CBOs and NGOs etc.
- Technical inputs and handholding support is being provided for better implementation of the respective jobs of the above mentioned institutions.
- Facilitating formation and strengthening of user interest groups like Farmer's Club, Producer Company etc. as per the need.

LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT

Today the biggest challenge that our country is facing is promotion and support of large number of livelihoods. In our country every year number of people coming in to the working age group and all of these should be given equal opportunity to grow and progress. Our approach of livelihood is to keep a household meaningfully occupied in a sustainable manner with dignity.

AGRICULTURE

WHAT IS THE NEED?

Agriculture has always been and still continues to be main source of employment for majority of the Indian population. Same is the case for the tribal regions of southern Rajasthan where agriculture employs around 70% of total workforce. If we look around the tribal region of Udaipur district where most of the families are BPL (Below Poverty line), living in remote and deprived areas with small-marginal land holdings; where there is little or no access to infrastructural facilities and extension services. Most of the population is employed in agriculture, but because of obsolete techniques of farming coupled with poor quality of inputs, production is hardly fulfilling farmer's own requirement i.e. their agricultural produce is unable to produce sufficient income.

OUR APPROACH

Enhancing productivity and diversification by introducing accessible and sustainable agricultural practices are the core strategies of GSS's agriculture programs. Our area specific planned interventions are not only increasing productivity but also ensuring food security, farm prosperity and livelihood enhancement of the local community in the target areas.

HORTICULTURE

For enabling agriculture to become a sustainable livelihood option for small and marginal farmers, GSS is promoting Integrated Farming System in the tribal area. This approach is all about integrating agriculture and its allied activities for facilitating optimum use of available resources to generate a sustainable livelihood. Horticulture is one such activity that currently we are encouraging farmers for vegetable cultivation and fruits plantation. Over 2000 families are currently involved in GSS's horticulture program which is not only providing a dependable source of income to small and marginal farmers but also fulfilling their nutritional requirement. Advanced and area specific inputs coupled with healthy and sustainable techniques of cultivation are being introduced in the target areas to ensure quantity as well as quality of produce. Some silent features of this intervention are :

- By introducing advanced and area specific input for vegetable cultivation, a dependable source of income is being generated for small and marginal farmers in this tribal area.

- Promotion of healthy techniques for cultivation to ensure quality of produce.

LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

Livestock often form the major capital reserve of farming households and, in general, enhance the economic viability and sustainability of a farming system. Livestock integrated into farming is an age old traditional practice of many farming communities in semi-arid regions. In the tribal region of southern Rajasthan there is a large stock of cattle population but the returns are very poor due to weaker breeds, poor rearing practices, lack of veterinary services and poor market linkages. GSS has implemented an innovative dairy development program 'Heifer Project ' in tribal dominated Sarada block of Udaipur district. GSS's interventions in the Heifer Project were extended through the introduction of better quality of breeds by providing two heifers with different pregnancy period to each beneficiary, training of beneficiaries in feeding and husbandry practices, development of cadre veterinary care and the creation of systems for effective marketing. Through this intensive dairy development program, farmers in this tribal area were introduced to the cross breeding of animals for the first time successfully. This program not only resulted in a rapid growth in milk production but also a substantial change in the structure of cattle population has been observed in the target areas and because of which now this area has become a major milk supplier in the Udaipur district. GSS is also promoting goat rearing due to its suitability to semi-arid regions and goat rearing provides a household with numerous products like milk, skin, meat and manure. Despite goat-rearing being a rarity, earnings are low due to poor husbandry practices in our area. Currently we are focusing on our watershed area by promoting small flocks with breed improvement, feed supplementations and veterinary care. Apart from this, animal husbandry camps are being organized in association with Government Agencies.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Soil, water, biomass and biodiversity are fundamental for the viability of farming system and hence for rural economy. Most of rural poor depend on land and water resources for their livelihood and unfortunately various phenomena including deforestation, drought, soil erosion etc. have resulted in decreased income of these families. Our approach of Natural Resource Management is to maintain and enhance natural asset in such a manner that ensures a sustainable livelihood for present as well as future generation.

WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Watershed Development Program is a strategy for integrated rural development, especially in rain-fed and drought prone areas. GSS is working on Integrated Watershed Management i.e. incorporating natural resources management with community livelihoods in a sustainable manner. This approach requires participatory planning with the people, to develop systems and treatment measures that are most suitable to the resources available. For this GSS is working with different village level institutions and their local leaders to sustain their ecological system. Currently, GSS is directly implementing watershed programs for 5590 acres of land in 18 villages. For ensuring quality in planning and implementation of watershed projects, GSS is using Geospatial Technology through the application of modern tools of Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System (GIS).