

**Internship
at
Prayas, Chittaurgarh**

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INTRODUCTION

Prayas (Endeavour) is a voluntary organization working for social political economical development in Chittaurgarh district of southern Rajasthan. Established in 1979, Prayas, as its name suggest, is distinguished primarily by its evolving orientation. It has taken up many kinds of issues and undertaken a variety of projects with several, sometimes divergent approaches. The unity that underline this diversity has been provided by Prayas pro-people and pro-empowerment orientation, continuous effort to respond to people's voices and changing circumstances, the priority given to concrete experiences over conceived dogma. Over its more than two decades, Prayas has been characterized by creative efforts and experimental, open ended attitudes.

VISION

To build a society free from social, cultural, economic, religious, gender and geographical discrimination.

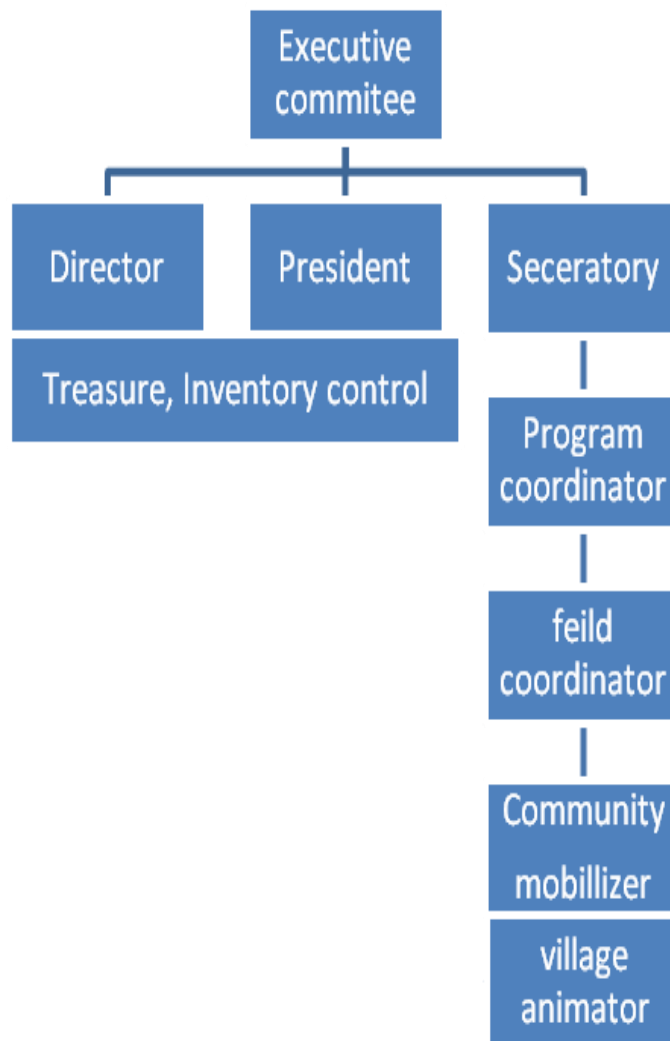
MISSION

Prayas believes that only revitalization of self esteemed of the poor can bring out an everlasting improvement in their quality of life.

OBJECTIVES

1. Enable poor to have opportunities for their social, economic, physical and cultural growth.
2. Create alternative knowledge and mechanisms for community development.
3. Lobby to secure social, economic, political and cultural rights for all.
4. Respond to contemporary poverty related community needs.
5. Campaign for gender sensitive conduct and equity.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



WORKING AREAS

1. HEALTH

Despite the UN and UNICEF goals articulated in 1978 of “Health for All by 2000”, India and many other developing countries have yet to see this goal become a reality. Prayas has focused its work on public health since its inception in 1979 and works extensively on the dual issues of empowering people to use available facilities and of strengthening the public health care system so that it is accessible and affordable to the poor. The cumulative effect of high levels of premature mortality and morbidity negatively impacts the overall productivity of a nation. Due to lack of nutritious food, unhygienic conditions, and lack of existing infrastructure, the rural poor are especially in need of health care services. In addition, women, children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to illness and have specific health needs. Prayas’ work in health is focused on putting pressure on decision makers, governments and the private sector to improve health services, as well as on increasing awareness among rural communities about the causes of disease and disease prevention, and promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Activities In Relation To Health

1. Community empowerment for better health and health security
2. Empowerment of children and adolescents for better health
3. State level campaign and networking for the Right to Health Care.
4. State level advocacy program for creation and subsequent implementation of state health policy
5. State level advocacy program against coercive population control policies
6. Community AIDS Awareness Program
7. Training for government health care providers on community health issues and epidemiological skills enhancement
8. Capacity building program for NGO workers.

2. GENDER

In a country where resources are limited and the basic necessities of life are not easily accessible to most, women’s needs are often the last to be met. The secondary status of women in Indian society can be measurably seen in persistently *high maternal mortality rates*, low educational levels, limited freedom of speech and participation in society, the practice of child marriage, and generally poor health outcomes for women. In Rajasthan especially, traditional practices such as dowry and sati violate women’s human rights. The persistence of the problem has much to do with the fact that most of these harmful customs are deeply rooted in the tradition and culture of society. Prayas is committed to overturning these socially entrenched values through a number of campaigns dedicated to raising awareness about the issues surrounding gender and working to increase the availability educational and health resources for women.

Activities in relation to Gender

1. Campaign for gender sensitive conduct and equity
2. Gender sensitization training program for government health care providers
3. Organization of workshops and campaigns to stop gender discrimination in society.
4. Initiation of a state level networks to end the practice of female feticide and declining child sex ratio
5. Capacity building program for NGO workers

3. CIVIL LIBERTIES & STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

Activities in relation to civil Liberties and Strengthening Democracy

1. Organization of public hearings and information dissemination to increase transparency and accountability of government development works.
2. Awareness campaigns for citizens aimed at bringing transparency in government election processes.
3. Campaign to empower and increase awareness among elected public representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

PROJECTS DONE BY PRAYAS

1. Advocating for Right to Free Treatment for Universal Access to Health Care

Rajasthan govt. has already made an announcement for making medicines available for free to everyone who registers for treatment in any public health facility and so has the government of Bihar. However what still is an issue of concern is how the process will be carried out and what would be the mechanisms adopted for implementation and monitoring of free medicines in these states. Another challenge would also be to convince people to access services from public health settings which would require massive awareness campaigns and to change people's mindsets about generic and free medicines. What still seems like a big loophole is the fact that despite these announcements by the state governments, there are virtually no steps undertaken by the same governments to regulate private health practices.

Civil society organizations all over the country will have a crucial role to play in advocating for free medicines and treatment in their respective states. Government might have an important role to play in the implementation of the whole project, but there are some major areas where the civil society organizations and the community members will need to intervene and play a crucial part. Governments have a responsibility to ensure both – the quality of medicines and the quality of the information about medicines being available to consumers. Apart from this a strong system of citizen based monitoring of health services will also have to be developed. A strong system of monitoring would ensure that periodic data is generated on the status of health services delivery and that the quality of services is upgraded.

Keeping this into consideration, Prayas hereby proposes to conduct orientation workshops for civil society organization members, especially the partners of Oxfam India on the above mentioned issues in order to pave way for a nationwide campaign on free treatment for all at govt. health facilities.

2. Advocacy on the Issue of Access to Treatment of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a growing public health concern in India. The specific areas of concern which are lagging behind include- treatment of Reproductive Tract Infections, referral of cases to VCTC, initiation of Anti-retroviral therapy (ART) for HIV positive and AIDS cases, follow up of patients on ART, management of opportunistic infections in AIDS cases.

Prayas hereby serves as an advocacy resource center to take up evidence based advocacy to strengthen and improve facilities for appropriate management of HIV/AIDS cases in the country. The goal of the initiative is to advocate for availability of better services, treatment and contribute to a better-informed workforce for management of HIV/AIDS and related opportunistic infections in the country.

3. Orienting Civil Society Organization on Right to Free Treatment and Building up system

The total health spending in India is one of the lowest in the world, and most of it is private expenditure in the form of out of pocket payments. In spite of the launch of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in the year 2005, there seems to be hardly any reduction in the out of pocket expenditure (OoPE) of the people seeking health care. As a result, vast majority of citizens of this country have to spend up to 80% of health care expenditure from out of their pockets. This is attributed by the health activists to unaccountable governance in the primary health care in most part of the country and especially Rajasthan.

Keeping the above fact into consideration, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) Rajasthan since past few years has been continuously advocating for free treatment to all in the state. The project is supposed to cover every one below and above the poverty line categories who register for treatment at government hospitals. The programme is to be launched on Gandhi Jayanti (2nd October) this year. This land mark announcement will certainly increase the access to treatment several folds and 40% patients who used to slide down in poverty after single hospitalization will stop. Free treatment will also eliminate the use of unnecessary and unreasonable medicines which will save the efficacy of medicines for future generations.

However, while this announcement is a very important first step accomplished, its operationalization is going to be very challenging. Government might have an important role to play in the implementation of the whole project, but there are some major areas where the civil society organizations and the community members will need to intervene and play a crucial part. Given the rich outreach and hold that the civil society organizations have at the grassroots, they can play a significant role in motivating people to access govt. health services and benefits from the free medicine provision. They can also play an

important role in monitoring of health services and ensuring community's participation into it.

Prayas therefore aims to orient members of civil society organizations about the basic concept of right to free treatment and its significance in context of right to health and universal access to health care and to subsequently prepare and organize them for setting up systems of citizen based monitoring to ensure that free medicines are available to all as a matter of their right.

Learning objective

In Prayas I was involved in the project of promoting Sexual and reproductive health rights, as 'Programme Coordinator – Health' to undertake programme coordination under the project "Expanding Access to Reproductive Rights: Using Law to Guarantee Reproductive Health and Rights in India". While I was largely engaged in this project, I am also involved in other health related projects and activities of the organisation as and when there is a felt need .

Tasks Assigned:

- Conducted fact-findings throughout the state in support of new and ongoing litigation.
- Responsible for follow up, monitoring and implementation of planned project activities throughout the state.
- Organize workshops, meetings and seminars as per the plan.
- Assisted with documentation and publication work.
- Worked in close association with the health team.
- Timely preparation of progress reports and other administrative activities.
- Extensive field visits throughout the state and also outside.
- other responsibility / task assigned when they needed.

Learnings:

- Ability to expeditiously and efficiently complete the tasks assigned.
- Exercise initiative in contributing to activities in and outside mandate.
- Worked effectively as a team member.
- Ability to adhere to deadlines.