

# COHESION FOUNDATION TRUST – STRATEGY DOCUMENT

## 1.0 PREAMBLE

Like any living organism, institutions also go through a lifecycle. In this process, it is important to carry out strategic review at periodic intervals. Cohesion, which started as a support organization in the year 1998, has gone through a shift from just support to intervention. Cohesion started its implementation work since 2001. The areas identified were among the most disadvantaged talukas in Gujarat – e.g. Rapar in Kutch, Maliya in Rajkot and Santhalpur in Patan district. Moreover, there had hardly been NGOs working in these areas, mainly because these were quite far off from the district head quarters.

The organization has developed strategies on key areas related to its working, such as Institutional Development, Natural Resources Management (NRM), Decentralized Governance and Livelihoods promotion. However, a comprehensive strategy was not developed as the organization had been in evolution stage. At this juncture when the organization is in a growing phase, it was important to carry out diagnostic analysis of Cohesion and decide its further strategy.

## 2.0 PROCESSES FOLLOWED IN THE STRATEGY FORMULATION

It being a pro-active step, care was taken not to rush up as well as not limiting it to be done by the consultants and a few key decision makers. It, therefore, had series of participatory elements and was done in phases so as to build on the work done in different stages. The processes followed in this regard are as follows:

- a) Requesting Human Institutional Development Resource Centre (HIDRC) – a Unit of Jan Vikas – to facilitate formulation of strategy, who kindly agreed and did so in all the phases.
- b) Organization of a workshop on June 2006, attended by core staff of Cohesion, to understand its current stage in the context of Organizational Life Cycle, realize the values and core competencies of the organization using appreciative enquiry methodology and initiate processes related to defining the future strategic focus of the organization. (Report on [workshop](#) enclosed).
- c) Sharing the proceedings of the workshop in the meeting of the Advisory Board members and taking the inputs of members for further processes.
- d) Facilitation by HIDRC on ‘Future Search Processes’ (a sort of visioning process), through a workshop held on 27 December 2006, attended by core staff of Cohesion, some Advisory Board members and Mr Binoy Acharaya, Director Unnati as a special invitee. Sharing of the key milestones that have shaped the organization in the workshop and carrying out further deliberations, based on this. (Report on [workshop](#) enclosed).
- e) As follow-up of this workshop, preparation of draft Position Papers on support function, knowledge building and implementation by Core team of Cohesion.

- f) Refining the Position Papers based on inputs from HIDRC.
- g) Sharing the Position Papers in the meeting of the Advisory Board members and finalizing these documents (Position papers on [implementation](#), [support](#) and [knowledge](#) building roles enclosed).

### **3.0 KEY STRATEGIES**

Based on the environmental analysis, aspirations of individual team members and the specialization it has developed to some extent over the last few years, Cohesion wishes to contribute to the development of practical solutions at grass-root level on poverty debate in a holistic manner i.e. addressing economic, social, and political poverty. Thus it is an Organization striving to empower vulnerable communities to significantly and sustainably enhance their livelihood security and building their capacities to manage their day-to-day Livelihood, Health and Education needs in sustainable manner'. This gets reflected in the Mission and Vision statements, cited below:

**Mission: 'Cohesion, guided by transparency and accountability, is committed to sustainable socio-economic development of vulnerable sections with a special focus on women in under serviced areas through direct action and providing support services for social processes to the development sector.'**

**Vision: 'An organization committed to striving for a world in which people and the natural environment are in harmony with each other, a world in which people, men and women, are in harmony with each other, a world in which all have enough to meet their genuine emotional and physical needs, and a world in which the diversity of humankind is celebrated.'**

The **Values** being practiced by the organization, as experienced by different stakeholders, are as follows:

1. Accountability
2. Mutual trust
3. Sensitivity
4. Equity
5. Transparency
6. Openness
7. Professionalism
8. Participation / Team Work

As already mentioned, Cohesion strives for livelihoods security. It emerged in the review that Cohesion will follow **AREA APPROACH**. The Livelihoods will be at the nucleus and other programmatic interventions will be supporting accomplishment of livelihoods security.

## SECTORAL PRIORITIES

The review helped in identifying the following sectoral priorities:

### Economic sector priorities

- Farm based livelihoods options
- Non-farm based livelihoods options
- Micro-finance and micro-credit

### Social sector priorities

- Water & sanitation
- Education & other child rights related issues, especially of girl child
- Health – physical, mental, psychological, reproductive and sexual
- Social securities
- Disaster preparedness and management
- Decentralized governance

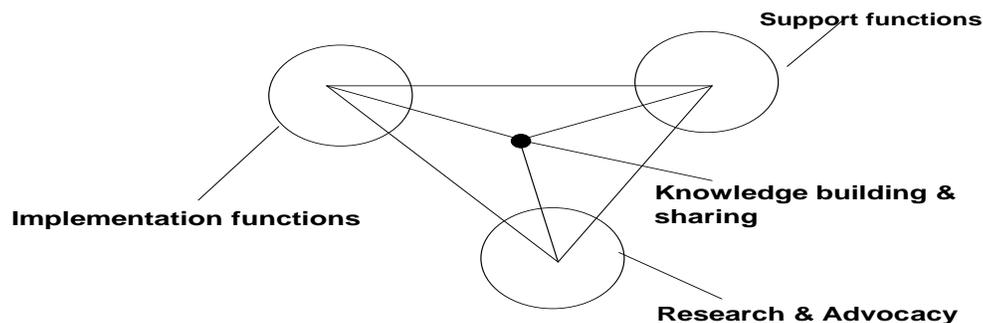
It is difficult to develop competencies in all the areas for an organization, Cohesion will develop linkages with other institutions, having specialization on specific themes, such as on child rights, VAW, health etc. This will enable it to contribute more meaningfully to the accomplishment of the livelihoods security.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

The review helped in identifying three roles for Cohesion:

- a) Implementation functions
- b) Support functions
- c) Research & advocacy

Different options were considered and the following organizational design was finalized:



This clearly indicates the emphasis on the gambit of knowledge building and sharing through the three roles.

#### **4.0 COHESION's APPROACH**

There are certain cross cutting themes, observed in all strategic interventions to ensure sustainable development and social justice. The approach is community based and bottom-up to ensure the needs and issues faced by communities get represented and addressed by programs.

Strengthening people's institutions and prioritizing women's' role in decision-making ensure processes that help in mainstreaming gender. On the other hand, most vulnerable communities are identified at micro planning stage to empower them and help secure proper position in community-based institutions.

Our field work and community mobilization skills have been appreciated and it is evident from the fact that we have got an opportunity to work with very competitive INGOs as well as a number of Government departments and networks. As on September 2007, Cohesion is working in 33 villages in 4 talukas of Navsari district, 24 villages in 2 talukas of Patan district, 20 villages in 2 talukas of Banaskantha district, 75 villages in 2 talukas of Kutch district and 60 villages in 5 talukas of Rajkot district.

Cohesion will make endeavors to follow the steps given below for all its implementation projects:

- Undertake baseline study (not necessarily very scientific) and carry out micro planning at cluster level.
- Prioritize vulnerable groups and identify specific needs related to the specific theme.
- Organize communities and build capacity to plan and execute activities.
- Undertake interventions in different thematic areas.
- Promote networking interaction with other NGOs, CBOs, Govt and academic institutions.
- Conduct studies, assessment of status in programme areas, reviewing related government Policies and schemes.
- Establish market linkages between village communities/groups/associations and markets for sustainable livelihoods.
- Monitor and map impact of the intervention on reducing vulnerabilities & restoring livelihood/ income and social securities.

#### **5.0 WHAT COHESION WILL STOP DOING**

The review also helped in identifying what Cohesion will stop doing. Its work can be more effective if following activities are avoided:

- **Adhoc Projects, such as making compound walls in ICDS centres.**

Team felt that in such projects, the processes get ignored and the fast pace of the project to achieve end result become more important.

- **Only Formation of Pani Samitis under Group Water Supply Schemes** – The Gujarat Government has recently taken initiative of forming Pani Samities in their Group Water Supply Schemes. Cohesion, being partner of Water & Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO) in Navsari and Rajkot districts, was requested to take up this activity, where the role is just to form the Pani Samities. Formation of such groups is not in conformity with our strategy and way of functioning because when we form any institution, we commit a long-term support. The group is supported till it becomes self sufficient. Secondly the villages are far off from our operational area, leading to use of lot of our resources in this activity. We, therefore, have decided not to take up such activities in future and have already refused when requested for Patan district.
- **Avoiding implementation projects of shorter duration:** The review indicates that there are 5 projects which have time period of 6 or less than 6 months duration. Our experience of such projects indicates that some processes have either to be squeezed or not to be taken up at all to accomplish such time frames. As we believe in carrying out certain non-negotiable processes, we have decided not to take up such projects in future.
- **Prioritizing geographical areas:** We have identified areas in the existing districts, where we shall continue our commitment for long term development. **There are certain talukas in Rajkot district, where we will withdraw after completing the commitments for Swajaldhara Project.** The Talukas to be dropped are Vankaner, Padhadri and Tankara, except that we shall continue providing support to the Women's Federation in Tankara taluka.

## 6.0 WHAT COHESION WILL DO DIFFERENTLY

This aspect has been debated internally and following are the responses:

- Collaboration with PRI aiming to
  - Make PRI accountable to Gramsabha.
  - Increase participation of women and vulnerable in PRI body and Gramsabha.
- Definition of vulnerability should be clearly understood with emphasis on factors causing vulnerability and not categorizing vulnerable as a separate group.
- We should first identify the disadvantaged areas and then design the projects based on the felt needs in that area.
- Village Development Committees and Pani Samitis should continue functioning even after the project completion – These institutions should not be just for the implementation of some projects but should get mainstreamed so as to take up the issues beyond the project period.
- We should work more pro-actively with the Government, especially related to developing models and policy influencing.

## **7.0 FOCUS AREAS IN IMPLEMENTATION ROLE**

Following are the two key focus areas for Cohesion in its implementation role:

- **People's institutions**
- **Livelihoods**

### **7.1 People's Institutions**

#### ***7.1.1 Why does Cohesion believe in promoting village institutions?***

People's participation is a predetermined factor for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Cohesion believes that strengthening the productive capacity of human and natural resources on which community depend for their livelihood will lead to reduction of poverty. Participatory approach questions the dominant structure of power and asks for redistribution of resources and community control over these resources instead of control of few. Cohesion's mission and vision supports that participation should aim at empowerment of community, wherein the process would lead to enhancing ability of individuals to decide and take control over matters affecting their own lives.

Community participation helps them to organize and resolve problems themselves with a little support from the external forces. This approach enhances community's competence about the issues they face on day to day basis and the resources they need to tackle these issues one by one. It is a fact that one of the main causes of the voice of vulnerable not being heard in the mainstream decision making is that they are not organized hence have no voice or space for collective action. For this the organization of poor/vulnerable sections of society becomes pertinent. Organizing vulnerable is also a strategy for empowering them. With this understanding Cohesion believes in promoting Village institutions while undertaking any project for intervention in its programme areas.

The VIs promoted by Cohesion started with activities related to Natural Resource development including, Agriculture development, Micro Savings and other non farm based livelihood options. These activities, however, acted as a means for participation of vulnerable community and not as a goal by itself, while moving towards empowerment. This process enabled involving these groups in decision processes affecting their own lives and also making the dominant section more sensitive towards the needs of vulnerable. There are instances, especially in Patan district, where MVMs have been formed with an empowerment perspective and not as a vehicle for implementing some interventions.

#### ***7.1.2 Why does COHESION believe in organizing women only initially?***

Even among the poorer households, women are the most affected lot. They comprise a sizable section of the poor, unemployed and the economically and socially disadvantaged groups in our society. Women of economically poor class combined with social disadvantage are victims of multiple inequities: class, caste, gender, religion.. . Since Cohesion's focus is on vulnerable sections of the society, women of this category become the target group. If men from these sections are also organised, then the hierarchy within the household in terms of gender will still exist. Hence, in order to give negotiating power and collective strength to this section of the society, Cohesion believes in organising only the women initially. When organised in a group women will become

more confident and will be able to articulate their skills required in exercising their choices in addition to increasing their own employment potentials and income through savings.

### 7.1.3 Overall strategy of Cohesion for Village Institutions

Following strategy for Village Institutions has been finalized:

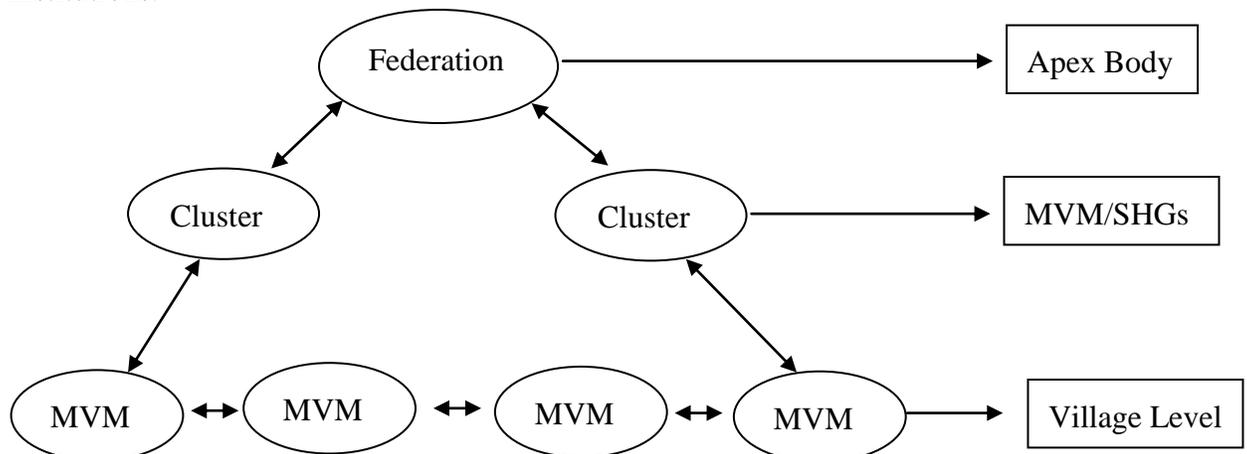
#### Target group

- COHESION will organise only vulnerable section of society with class/caste/gender equity perspective.
- COHESION will not work with individual persons but will organise vulnerables in a group, thus, promoting their village level organisations.
- Since women are the most vulnerable as they face not only gender but caste, class, religion and ethnicity based discrimination, COHESION will organize women initially, of all class, but particularly of poor economic class. Where human resources of the organization are scarce, focus will be to organize women of only economically poor community in the area.
- Though COHESION will organise only women, it will evolve strategies by which it will take male members of the village into confidence.

#### Three tier structure of VIs:

Based on the past experience, COHESION proposes a three tier structure of village institutions.

- At the village level, there will be village level Institutions, promoted of socio-economic vulnerable sections with an empowerment approach. This would provide them with a platform where they could voice their opinions/ concerns about the issues related to village development and influence the decisions to be taken.
- Beyond the village level, COHESION will federate the Vis to make them self reliant and self regulated. An apex body of Vis will provide them a forum where policy decisions can be taken and various developmental issues can be entertained.
- COHESION, thus, proposes three tier structure for federating the village institutions.



## ***Strategy at village level***

### **Form of Village Institution**

- On the basis of the past experience related to accountability and sustainability of CBO at village level, the form of VI accepted by Cohesion is membership based organizations and not a representative form of VI.
- The Vis promoted by COHESION would be issue based, and not project based.

### **Nomenclature of Village Institution**

- Women's organizations promoted by Cohesion will be called as Mahila Vikas Mandal, since they aim at around development of women.

### **Size of Village institution**

- At village level, there will be 15 to 20 members in a group. Keeping in mind the banking requirements for an informal nature of group, the maximum size of the group will be 20 members only.
- Whenever there are more than 20 vulnerable families in a village, Cohesion would promote more than one MVMs in a village.

### **Activities/Interventions:**

- One of the common activities of the MVM will be savings and credit. This activity will be carried out at the MVM level only and all decisions pertaining to this activity will be taken during regular meetings. Savings and credit activity is a strategy for entry point in the mandla, a reason to meet at regular intervals a also a strategy for economic empowerment for the group members.
- All developmental interventions – be it of Cohesion or otherwise, will be implemented through MVMs only.(On-farm, Off-farm, Non-farm). There will be no activity which will be going directly to the beneficiaries.
- In large villages (area or population wise) where even multiple MVMs do not represent the full village population, committee will be promoted by taking representatives of MVMs along with representatives(women) from other caste and class who have been left out OR by involving those men in the committee who support and accept women leadership . Selection of these men/women will be done by the MVM members only.
- Such a committee promoted for any particular activity will be accountable to the MVM. Committee promoted is not a hierarchy within the group nor is it promoted to have a short cut to decisions related to the intervention.
- All key decisions for the intervention will be taken by the larger body of the group as a whole, while only day to day decisions for execution will be taken by the committee.
- There may be different committees among the MVMs depending on the nature of the intervention. Since all Natural Resources (NR) based interventions are interrelated, there will be only one committee for this. Small teams or sub committees will be promoted as and when required, for other related activities.
- The same team/committee may not be given responsibility for a new activity. New members can be added or old members can be removed from the team as per the need. This is to avoid concentration of power among few group members.

- After the work is completed, the MVM will call for a Gram Sabha and encourage social audit on the matter. MVM may appoint the team/committee responsible for presenting reports of work done and expenses incurred.

## **7.2 Livelihoods**

We believe that to influence change in the livelihoods of people and prepare them to cope disasters, community based resource base, especially natural and human resources, regimes should be improved and strengthened. In addition to this, institutional linkages should be strengthened and considerable lobbying need to be done to influence state and other partners. Strong and sustained village institutions could maintain the health of natural resources, besides arranging access to other resources and hence secured livelihood for poor.

The goal of our livelihood interventions is to execute livelihood based coping strategies to reduce vulnerability of people. The objective is to increase the income and food security of vulnerable communities through complementary farm and non farm based livelihood options We strive to adopt livelihood-based approaches that essentially comprises of livelihood restoration strategies i.e., resources conservation, enhancement and empowerment of local people in its management as intervention objective.

- Livelihood-based restoration: the program focuses on activities such as conservation, development and management of resources
- Empowerment: the program facilitates social and other processes to empower poor.

### **7.2.1 Program Strategy**

Initially one cluster of villages will be taken up on pilot basis where the interventions are carried out for 3 years. The program strategies will be based on tackling priority issues in defined cluster of villages. Within the cluster of village, livelihoods based perspectives will be adopted to the extent feasible. This could be around water resources, land resources or livestock or agriculture/non-agriculture based livelihoods. Working with collaborative partnership arrangements, the project will focus on physical interventions, capacity building, documentation, action and research, advocacy.

- Designing micro-plans to improve productivity of the resources and restore livelihoods of dependant population
- To create/ generate new livelihood opportunities with in the given situation
- Address issues- with in the cluster
- Capacity Building, thematic action research and documentation, advocacy.
- Working in partnership with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Leveraging other programs

### **7.2.2 Priority Issues**

Based on our interventions and experience thereof, following priority physical interventions have emerged:

#### **Water - Drinking water and supplementary irrigation**

**Priority:** Drinking water, revival of traditional water conservation and use practices, creation of new water resources and advocacy for water rights and management

**Project Focus:** Institutional development, Gender Mainstreaming, Rights, Advocacy

#### **Dryland farming and diversification**

**Priority:** Agricultural diversification; income diversification from agriculture; Better land management techniques (in situ soil & water conservation), efficient water use and enhancing productivity and forward linkages in the spheres of credit, marketing and value addition

**Project Focus:** Institutional development, Gender, Research & Advocacy

#### **Livestock and dairy based input services and linkages**

**Priority:** Exploring alternative livestock management practices in agro-pastoral context, evolving institutional base and enhancing productivity and forward linkages in the spheres of credit, marketing and value addition.

**Project Focus:** Institutional development, Rights, Gender, Advocacy

#### **Non farm livelihoods - Embroidery and Crafts**

**Priority:** Exploring such options at community and individual levels for vulnerable sections and facilitate establishment of backward and forward linkages of the community with finance institutions, technical institutions, market etc

**Project Focus:** Institutional development, Gender Mainstreaming, Rights, Advocacy

#### **Microfinance**

**Priority:** Reduce through different products of micro finance, including insurance, the household vulnerability; support household enterprise and promoting this as a mean of women empowerment.

**Project Focus:** Institutional development, Gender Mainstreaming, Rights, Advocacy

### **7.2.3 Approach and Crosscutting themes in Livelihood Strategic Interventions**

The following elements are part of Approach and Crosscutting themes in Livelihood Strategic Interventions:

- :Participation
- Gender mainstreaming
- Evolving inter institutional linkages
- Decentralisation of resources
- Local capacity building
- Development of special groups around resource management interventions
- Bottom-up planning and design

We will develop Cohesion team's understanding on livelihood in each level so as to accomplish this more effectively. The areas identified for building the following capacities:

- Decide geographical area and extent of coverage for livelihood interventions.
- To get idea about scope/potential for livelihood interventions
- Fund raising efforts (with Govt and other funding agencies)
- Analyze budget, impact from livelihood perspective
- Develop livelihood related process and impact indicators.
- Encourage CBOs to take up more livelihoods related activities.
- External environment assessment for Farm Based livelihoods

## **8.0 FOCUS AREAS IN SUPPORT ROLE**

### **8.1 Rationale**

Cohesion has been providing support since 1998 as a team of professionals. From 2001, a new meaning to support was added when we started taking up implementation programmes to use our experience. We got involved directly with the end users of our support functions: the people. This was a much planned move and we have been able to demonstrate our competence since then. Providing support to people's organization at grass-root levels has been a nucleus of all our interventions. Today with the changing times and various forces that drive us internally and externally, a need is being felt to transform the knowledge gathered over a period of about a decade. Knowledge transformation and dissemination can only take place if we start interacting and working more with others and for others. Therefore before going further, it is important to ask why Cohesion wants to take up support role. The answer can be found within following set of reasons.

#### **Expand outreach of Cohesion**

We have been deliberating internally on the following two questions in this regard:

- a) Why do we want to expand outreach?
- b) Will intensive work in a few areas be a better strategy?

Cohesion has been actively working in Gujarat state for the implementation work since 2001. We intend to continue working intensively in the already selected marginalized areas. We wish to spread our experiences to other states as to achieve our mission and vision more effectively, we need to reach and influence the lives of as many people as possible. If we cannot reach them directly then we can support others who can reach them. Providing support to other organizations would help to achieve the results within the limits of available resources.

#### **To make Cohesion's existence more effective and meaningful for the intended cause**

At micro level we have demonstrated our effectiveness. We have developed people's organizations and supported them till they become independent to a great extent. However, at macro level the attention so far has been on a reactive basis. Now we need to proactively take interest in functions related to support. This will make our work at macro level more effective and have a very positive effect on our ongoing programmes as well.

### **Increase efficiency of different stakeholders**

Once we increase our emphasis on support functions, it would not mean that support to the people organizations will not happen. In fact support provided to them presently will draw from new experiences thus improving their effectiveness as well.

We would also be able to give support to small NGOs who are at a very infancy stage and need inputs on various aspects of organizational development.

Sharing of our resources in the form of various training modules and manuals will also help many organizations in their programmes.

### **Build linkages**

We would be able to build more linkages and collaborate with other organizations as we start to work with them.

### **Development: Organizational and Personal**

The motivational level of the staff will increase once a different role will be added to their roles and responsibilities. This will not have implication on the existing workload on them because ultimately the focus on implementation work will decrease and support functions will increase. We also have a set of consultants who work with us in providing support. The staff will also get an opportunity to use their experience for building and augmenting capacities of other organizations and gain from the experience of the consultants. This will add to the overall organizational and personal development.

### **Support functions: driving force for KBS**

As the capacity of the staff will be built on understanding the methodology of carrying out research work, their documentation and information processing skills will also improve. This will ensure that knowledge management is understood more clearly and there is a conscious effort towards knowledge building and sharing

### **Resource generation for Cohesion**

The resources generated from support functions will augment the organizational corpus. This will also be useful in effectively responding to the needs and bringing sustainability

## **8.2 Strategy formulation**

The role as a support providing organization can only be successful if we carefully design the strategy, allocate adequate resources to such functions and increased ownership towards processes and consequences.

There are number of ways of getting involved in support functions with varying degree of potential to get that opportunity. Basis of collaboration should be on the terms of mutual respect, accountability, transparency and not at the cost of loss to any of the partner.

To ensure that importance is given to this function and to make it more visible, first of all we will bring clarity internally among staff of support functions. There should be same level of understanding so that everyone can contribute her/his bit. For external awareness, we will mention this new role in our documents, brochure, reports, web site etc.

It will be very difficult to define at this stage how much time would be contributed to providing support. The answer lies in how much time Core group members would be able to give as there is a need to ensure that it should not be at the cost of quality related to implementation.

### ***8.2.1 What different we want to do now***

- Having a different outlook and approach to the processes based on providing support.
- Taking a proactive step to find such opportunities.
- Carrying out critical analysis of competencies in the individuals.
- Strategically choosing projects based on the competencies in hand rather than taking whatever comes the way.
- Image building of the organization - not of the individuals - based on the core competencies.
- Clearly define the framework within which such functions would be carried out, internally or externally.

### **The staff assigned for support functions will be drawn from implementation projects, besides doing new recruitment**

### ***8.2.2 Marketing our potential of providing support***

As part of the process to establish our position in the market, it has been examined how our current capabilities and staff skills match with what we believe to be our clients' current and future needs.

Following activities will be taken up to market our potential:

- Composing a new organization profile which includes our capacity as a support providing organization
- Adding a pamphlet or leaflet to the brochure giving brief information of our support functions
- Mapping the clients and their needs. Mapping exercise should bring out core areas where support has a high potential.
- Building rapport with other similar NGOs/Institutions/Individuals. If necessary we can build partnership with others for jointly taking up support projects.
- Visiting cards of the staff can also mention their skills for providing support.
- Some specific trainings and workshops would also be required for the staff to equip their skills further.
- We can introduce our role as a support providing organization by sending introductory letters to everybody we have worked with so far and other related stakeholders.

## **9.0 KNOWLEDGE BUILDING & SHARING**

The review helped reconsidering how COHESION operates internally and how it relates to others at local, national and international levels. There is a need felt to develop a knowledge infrastructure which allows knowledge to be built upon and shared among the

masses, individuals in an organization and across organizations. Specific objectives related to this have been defined as follows:

- undertake research into organizational initiatives so far to build knowledge, if any and to
- Devise a strategy for its effectiveness as a new dimension to the organizational identity in the phase of increasing importance of knowledge and its management.

Through Knowledge management, COHESION wishes to create, gather, organize, share, adapt and use knowledge systematically and routinely—from both inside and outside the organization—to help achieve organizational goals and objectives

Today Cohesion works as an implementing organization and also provides support to other organizations in various fields. The review gave a realization that COHESION needs to build upon knowledge base and strengthen human resources. These two aspects combined together will help to enhance implementation capabilities of individuals and organizations affecting various developmental challenges with livelihoods as one of the major challenges. We believe that organization development (OD) processes should begin in our organization first and then only we can advocate them to other organizations. Internal OD processes, such as **Envisioning Exercise, Appreciative Enquiry, SWOT analysis and Values Determination** etc have been carried out and internalized. The learning from these internal exercises helps us in disseminating the same to other organizations.

## 9.1 Rationale

In the early years, we were not well equipped to systematically capture and organize the wealth of knowledge and experiences gained from staff and development partners, and create links between groups and communities working on similar topics. Many staff could not comprehend the future benefits and were ignorant towards knowledge management. Managing knowledge is becoming increasingly important for us due to following reasons:

- Periodic reorganizations due to changes in the stages of the organization, i.e. shift from infancy and go-go to adolescence, can break the thread of institutional memory.
- Experience is dispersed along with the members of teams.
- Programs also include some contract staff, whose knowledge is less likely to be transferred to the organization; and
- Joint initiatives expect organizations to share knowledge.

The effort has recently started on a pilot basis. Based on the experience and the ongoing efforts for Knowledge Building Cohesion will strive to:

- Develop linkages with external knowledge platforms;
- Document and share the experiences of OD;
- Share implementation experiences;
- Transform the lessons learnt from experiences in the past into training;

- Capitalize experiences and lessons learnt by publishing in the form of audio/visuals and
- Organize a seminar cum workshop at state level to share with others about Cohesion's programmes.

## **9.2 Where are we now as an organization?**

We have good and dedicated staff, valuable processes and improving technology. We need to build on these to configure each component to learning and sharing environment. Our staff need to be empowered to contribute better to each other's development and therefore to the organization. We need to revise our core reporting processes to be more supportive of a knowledge **capturing environment**, and our technology needs to be better configured to create, store and share knowledge as well as to connect staff. The move towards a knowledge building and sharing culture is a progressive evolution and will be facilitated by testing out the approaches in a series of pilot projects. These pilots have to be clearly designed to demonstrate the value added by deliberate knowledge sharing in a selected environment.

The pilots are to show us what does or does not work. This means focusing on field offices and how they interact internally and with other field offices and Headquarters colleagues. We can only really learn by doing. The benefits of a knowledge sharing strategy must be central to the work of all staff in the Organization.

## **9.2 Learning from Others and Sharing Our Experiences**

As an organization, Cohesion gives great emphasis on learning from others. It participates in the dissemination workshops, arrange exposure visits to other organizations and organize meetings with specialists. Staff will be constantly encouraged to take advantage of the knowledge, experience, and expertise available in their own and other organizations and share their own knowledge with their colleagues.

## **9.3 Learning from Our Experiences**

COHESION must draw on proven practices and lessons learned when planning projects and making decisions. We do document good practices and experiences in the form of various project reports to be submitted to funding organizations, but the same needs to be internalized for our own reference in future through proper documentation system (manual/ electronic).

## **9.4 Optimum use of Information available**

COHESION is member of Solution Exchange – platform for sharing information related to different themes. It will participate actively in sharing information. Moreover, as it results in lots of information available on the net, the same will be screened and analyzed for deriving proper use.

## **9.5 How do we start**

Together the above mentioned challenges call for appropriate knowledge management tools and approaches to be applied in order to meet them. Institutionalizing KM, so that it

becomes a natural part of everyone's work, requires changes throughout the organization. Changes required at Cohesion's level would be

- Expand job descriptions (for example, requiring employees to have a core responsibility of knowledge building and sharing also). This added responsibility can be rewarded by acknowledging such efforts by mentioning names of staff in annual reports and other such reports.
- Add KM indicators to performance appraisals.
- Create project teams that cross divisional lines. Make it standard practice for those teams to generate and disseminate lessons learned. Team meetings can be a good platform for this.
- Strengthen communication channels with distant service sites. Strong communication and sharing with field offices is crucial to KM. otherwise all the efforts will remain in the domain of head office and field offices will not become part of the whole process.
- Encourage staff to routinely consult experts both inside and outside the organization
- Establish partnerships with other organizations.

These changes in the organizational culture will ensure that all staff members respect and seek to engage in learning, innovation, collaboration, and evidence-based decision making.

## **9.6 Collaboration with other institutions**

COHESION currently is relatively young organization and needs to gain more experience in contributing significantly to KBS. It will strive to collaborate on longer term basis with other institutions, involved in KBS, such as IIMs, IRMA, GIDR, TAPMI, Indian School of Livelihoods Promotion (ISLP) etc. It can also explore possibility of setting up Chair on specific themes of its core competencies in some of such institutions.