<u>Concept paper</u>

cohesion's role as a support providing organization

need for a paradigm shift

This paper presents the case of Cohesion, an organization that is planning to give an increased and deliberate emphasis to support functions along with its fairly well established image as an implementing organization. The presentation made is based on the OD workshops conducted earlier and valuable inputs and guidance from Janvikas.

1 Rationale

Cohesion has been providing support since 1996 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 thst drive us internally and externally, a need is being felt to transform the knowledge gathered over a period of 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

2 Present situation

The support role played by Cohesion so far has been supported by internal staff members and many other individuals and institutions. The list is given below:

Full time team members	Period of involvement
Rajesh Kapoor	1996 onwards
Ashok Dhakan	2000-01 and 2005-07
Kamlesh Vyas	2004-06
Falguni Lokhil	2006-07
Sujata Thakur	2004-05 and 2007 onwards
Rajesh Patel	1998-99 and 2005-06
Ruchi Malhotra	2000-01 and 2005-06
Manorama	2004-05
Others	
Individual	(approx)
Manish Mehta	45 days (2000-01)
Neha Mehta	45 days (2003-05)
Madhu Malhotra	30 days (1999-00)

Anandi Mehra	10 days (2000-01)
Kumar Agashe	30 days (2000-01)
Vibha Marfatia	25 days (2004-05)
A Bhanot	50 days (2004-05)
Institution	
UNNATI	1999-01 and 2002-03
FWWB	1999-00
Catalyst Management Services, Bangalore	1999-00 and 2004-05
Pem Consult, Denmark	1999 - 2004
Development Associates, Denmark	2005
GFA Germany	2006

2.1 Projects done so far

Projects focusing on participatory and gender aspects

- Review participatory approaches and gender issues emerging in the national level healthy highways project (done for DFID).
- Training to different stakeholders on participatory and gender aspects.

Project Management aspects of Complex Projects

- Review of Watershed Development Coordination Unit (WDCU)

  Danida has set up a WDCU for managing and coordinating watershed projects in India. The states covered include Orissa, MP, Karnataka and TN. We, jointly with PEMconsult, carried out review of this unit and suggested further strategic issues.

- Project Development Support to the Governments of Orissa, Gujarat and AP for second phase of funding by World Bank for AIDS Prevention Projects (done for DFID).

- Situation analysis and prioritization of projects, identification and selection of project partners for Partnership in Sexual Health Project in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat State (done for DFID).

- Project Management Consultancy for Partnership in Sexual Health Project Gujarat

- Perspective Development for Project partners of ACTIONAID

  We were asked to help project partners of ACTIONAID to develop perspective development for long-term interventions. The exercise involved demonstration, giving inputs and developing capacity of NGO staff to carry out such work so that the approach became institutionalized. The assignment included carrying out participatory need assessment; developing problem trees for the prioritized issues, working out strategies, plan for organization development and developing monitoring indicators. There has been very encouraging response from the community, especially the disadvantaged sections from class and gender perspective.

Projects focusing on support for capacity building and other inputs to different stakeholders

- Lead Capacity Building Agency for Women Empowerment Project (World Bank/IFAD funded)

  The assignment involves assessing capacity building needs of different stakeholders, developing capacity building strategy & plan, developing resource bank, arranging programmes and facilitating follow-up.

- Short term projects with NGOs

  We provide support to NGOs for specific aspects such as strategic review, monitoring & evaluation, capacity building for new interventions etc. Some of the NGOs, asking for such support, are small in size. The NGOs who have been supported include AKRSP, DSC, SEWA, Sadguru, NPYM Poshina, Family Planning Association of India, Jyoti Sangh, Community Science Centre, ANANDI, BSC, SEED etc.

- Capacity Building of Project Partners for Partnership in Sexual Health Project (done for DFID)

- To support Kantha Vistar Satatyapurna Vikas Samity (KVSVS) – an NGO, promoted by Shell at Hazira for organizational and programmatic aspects (focusing drinking water).

Research Projects

- Process Documentation Research for Participatory Irrigation Management

- Health Care Provider Study (done for DFID and Family Health International)

  We mobilized and managed a team of more than 35 people, with varied background such as medical sciences, sociology, market research, management etc.

- Process Documentation Research projects for NGOs and Govt. organizations.

- Research project related to review of gender and participatory approaches in JFM (Done with Dr. Bina Agarwal of IEG Delhi).

- Action Study Report on farmers of Mandvi Market shed for IDEi.

Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact assessment

- Evaluation of Watershed Projects in MP

  Pem Consult, on behalf of DANIDA Denmark, and we have evaluated the Watershed Projects in Madhya Pradesh. The work involved reviewing the progress and quality of the preparatory activities of the project, assessing the cooperation between the State government, NGO's and the communities, with special emphasis on participatory issues and recommend whether this gives basis for continuing the project. Formulate, if necessary, recommendations for improvements/adjustments in the draft Project Implementation Plan. The work also included a review of the awareness created amongst the target community regarding the project and the approach and strategy adopted by the project and a review of the status of the participatory methodologies adopted by the project.

- Review of Watershed Development Coordination Unit of DANIDA handing projects in different parts of India.

- We, along with Pem Consult, also evaluated the DANIDA's project on watershed in Karnataka. The aspects looked in to were similar to those mentioned for MP above.

- Evaluation of work of partners of AKF in education programme in rural areas.
- Evaluation of Targeted Intervention (TI) Programme for HIV/AIDS in India (For National AIDS Control Organization).
- Impact assessment of Watershed Project in MP (For DANIDA).
- Base line data collection for NABARD-IGWSS.

Hence the areas in which services have been provided include Research, Monitoring & Evaluation, Project Management Support, Capacity Building, Social Development aspects (Social Analysis, Gender Analysis, and Equity Analysis) etc.

2.2 What others think of Cohesion's support providing role

While providing support to other organizations, there can be two interpretations of the role. One is that there is some need identified in other organization and we are building their capacities by providing support because they do not have the required expertise to do so. The second interpretation could be that the other organization has the capacity to do it but due to lack of time or other project formalities they want to outsource it to other agencies. In this case also it is beneficial to us because it gives an opportunity to build professional relationships and adds to the credibility of the organization. Therefore our relation with client can be either of the two ways. Based on this discussion, the projects mentioned above can be categorized in two heads.

2.2.1 Capacity Building of others

- Training to different stakeholders on participatory and gender aspects.
- Review of Watershed Development Coordination Unit (WDCU)
- Perspective Development for Project partners of ACTIONAID
- Lead Capacity Building Agency for Women Empowerment Project (World Bank/IFAD funded)
- Short term projects with different NGOs
- Capacity Building of Project Partners for Partnership in Sexual Health Project (done for DFID)
- Research project related to review of gender and participatory approaches in JFM (Done with Dr. Bina Agarwal of IEG Delhi).
- To support Kantha Vistar Satatyapurna Vikas Samity (KVSVS) – an NGO, promoted by Shell at Hazira for organizational and programmatic aspects (focusing drinking water).

2.2.2 Outsourcing by others

- Review participatory approaches and gender issues emerging in the national level healthy highways project (done for DFID).
- Project Development Support to the Governments of Orissa, Gujarat and AP for second phase of AIDS Control Programme.
- Situation analysis and prioritization of projects, identification and selection of project partners for Partnership in Sexual Health Project in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat State (done for DFID).

- Project Management Consultancy for Partnership in Sexual Health Project Gujarat
- Action Study Report on farmers of Mandvi Market shed for IDEi.
- Process Documentation Research for Participatory Irrigation Management
- Health Care Provider Study (done for DFID and Family Health International)
- Process Documentation Research projects for NGOs and Govt. organizations.
- Evaluation of Watershed Projects in MP
- Review of Watershed Development Coordination Unit of DANIDA handing projects in different parts of India.
- We, along with Pem Consult, also evaluated the DANIDA's project on watershed in Karnataka.
- Evaluation of work of partners of AKF in education programme in rural areas.
- Evaluation of Targeted Intervention (TI) Programme for HIV/AIDS in India (For National AIDS Control Organization).
- Impact assessment of Watershed Project in MP (For DANIDA).
- Base line data collection for NABARD-IGWDP.

3   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 can be number of ways of getting involved in support functions with varying degree of potential to get that opportunity.

Ways to get involved in Support functions	Potential
Fund based – Requesting for grants	Low
Responding to advertisements	High
Called to provide service on invitation	High

Collaborating with others:
    • With other NGOs
    • With Government
    • With donors
    • With research and academic institutions.
    • With corporate
	High

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.
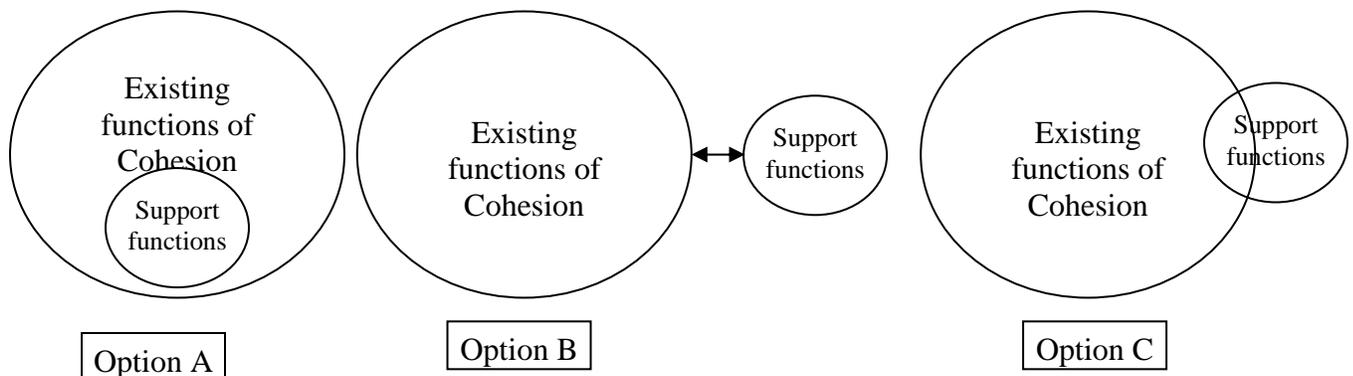
How will we ensure that importance is given to Support function and what will we do to make it more visible? First of all we will need to bring clarity internally among staff of support functions. There should be same level of understanding so that everyone can contribute her/his bit. For external awareness, we will have to 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.

3.1 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
- 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.

3.2 Options available

Existing functions of Cohesion

Support functions

Option A

Existing functions of Cohesion

Support functions

Option B

Existing functions of Cohesion

Support functions

Option C

Option A: The staff assigned for support functions will be drawn from staff assigned for implementation projects

Benefits

- People get more conceptual clarity hence their work becomes more effective.
- Can provide more practical inputs to clients
- Sometimes only implementation work becomes monotonous for team. Combination of this dual role will motivate them.
- Increased scope of innovations and new ideas at work.
- Overall capacity of the team will be built.

Limitations

- Prioritizing of work might become difficult for staff
- Quality in implementation projects may suffer as people may not be able to give much time on thinking for support services.

- The acceptability of field staff as resource persons might be low in case of some of the agencies availing support services.
- Field team may be able to take up effective role in training and developing training manuals but they may not be possessing competencies for other support services.

Option B: The staff assigned for support functions will be newly assigned

Benefits

- Separate team for support services.
- Their priority will be for support function only.

Limitations

- They may not be able to bring in the desired field realities in the work.
- The financial burden of the organization will increase.

Option C: The staff assigned for support functions are drawn from implementation projects as well as new recruitment

Benefits

- The team of support functions will have the advantage of having some members who have experience of implementation and some members who have background of providing support
- Not too much financial burden on the organization
- The team will have right mix of new as well as experienced members
- This option will have all other benefits of options A and B also

Limitations

- Prioritization of work will be a challenge as there will be two set of thinking. Team dynamics will of greater importance here.
- Assigning roles and responsibilities to achieve maximum output from the team would be a challenge

3.3 Critical analysis of competencies

Competency may be described in any of the forms such as knowledge, attitude, skill, other characteristics of an individual, motives, values, self concept etc. Competency required for any role can be grouped in to following four areas:

3.3.1 Case Study on Organizational competencies in providing support (Illustrated for two persons on sample basis)

	Falguni Lokhil	**Sujata Thakur**
Technical dealing with the technology or know-how associated with the function, role or task.	Identifying capacity building and training needs of the team on CBOs and providing the same. Providing future direction to CBOs based on long term organizational strategy and	Water and Sanitation, Public Health Shelter and other construction activities Emergency standards Training on water and

	planning Establishing linkages with other networks working in women's issues. Making proposals related to VI and mobilizing required resources Research and analytical skills related to VIs Event management skills Training to CBOs.	sanitation related aspects. Research and monitoring Documentation of projects based on various development and organizational aspects. Developing organizational annual reports, brochures and other print media for publicity and awareness Making proposals as a response to various advertisements and reference. Reporting to funding organizations about the progress of the projects Computer skills with ability to learn relevant softwares.
Managerial/ organizational dealing with the managerial aspects, organizing, planning, mobilizing resources, monitoring systems, use etc.	Planning and monitoring Budget planning and monitoring Establishing monitoring system related to CBOs.	Planning, monitoring and reviewing of projects Following up the proposals to identify gaps and mobilize resources accordingly Preparing organizational strategy documents
Human/ behavioral including personal, interpersonal and team related	Good rapport with team members and subordinates Strict attitude in case desired results are not achieved Good networking and liasioning skills with other organizations Assessment of the capacities required at field level for better interpersonal relations and providing the same Conflict resolution within the team Sensitizing team members to understand and respect the differences within the team based on class, caste, religion and	Affable team member with good interpersonal relations with others Less interaction with field staff Good negotiating and convincing skills Networking and coordinating with other agencies Sensitivity towards differences within the team based on class, caste, religion and gender Self discipline and organizing skills

	gender.	
Conceptual/ theoretical including visualizations, model building etc.	Good conceptual clarity on VI and how to take them forward towards sustainability Strategy formulation for organizational effectiveness Clarity on developing indicators based on conceptual models	Good data collection and analytical skills Abilty to work on different issues with conceptual clarity

3.4 Marketing our potential of providing support

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

Market research tools that can be used are[1]:Profile analysis — a subjective evaluation of the internal capabilities of the organization and its staff.

- Present activities – a listing of the activities currently provided to others
- Environment, sector, and market analysis
- Client Structure Analysis
- Competitor Analysis – a subjective evaluation of the competition.
- Organizational Analysis – an examination of the main market trends and their effects on the current and future activities of the organization.

Following activities can be taken up:

- 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 furnish 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.

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[1] http://www.apc.org/english/ngos/business/busplan/mtoolkit.htm

3.5 Potential threats

We can diversify financially by involving in income-generating enterprises that may or may not be developmental. A future factor to bear in mind here is that whether such choices about diversification made by us will collectively alter the character of our work with potentially negative implications on our image.

Once we start getting involved more in support functions, there is a possibility that the advantages of heterogeneity and adaptability of our approach will erode as our development practices might become standardized around official norms and practices. Such a shift will also draw us into applying official definitions and explanations of poverty, rather than our own necessary analysis of the situation. Further it is likely that our focus shifts on the areas, which are not actually under-serviced but are donor/outsourcing organization's priorities

There is a possibility that as only some of the staff will be taking up such roles; the image of the organization is built around some people rather than the organization itself. Also the stage of growth where Cohesion is standing right now, there is need to move beyond the founder leader in support functions.