Samarthan- Strategic Plan

2017-20

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STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SAMARTHAN- CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

2017-2020

Background to the Strategic Review

Samarthan, as one of the most reputed civil society organizations of Central India has created a distinct national footprint in the past two decades. By nurturing smaller organizations and promoting participatory approaches, it has been able to create a wide constituency for inclusive governance. Committed to constantly learning and evolving, Samarthan has been conducting periodic reviews to understand the larger policy environment and the course it needs to take in future, to assess its own position within that ecosystem and how it needs to adapt to the changing environment.

The past two strategic assessments commissioned by Samarthan (2005-10 and 2010-15) for assessing the effectiveness of its present work and charting a strategic plan for the future have led to structural changes within the organization, including the creation of three distinct responsibility-centers. These include the *Center for Social Accountability for Addressing Urban and Rural Poverty (CSAP)* to work on issues of governance and accountability mechanisms, the *Centre for Environment, Water, Sanitation and Community Health (CEWASH)* to work on piloting and scaling implementation models on environment, water, sanitation and health and the *Chhattisgarh Samarthan for Participatory Development (CGSPD)* that works with both these approaches in the state of Chhattisgarh.

These regular strategic reviews, since the time of its creation in 1995, have helped it to remain purposeful and relevant in the prevailing operative environment. Based on these strategic inputs and recommendations, Samarthan started as a *Support Organization* (SO) with the mandate to build capacities of smaller Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and to nurture networks of these grassroots organizations. Midway it also experimented by creating *two strategic divisions* within the organisation (*Participation in Governance and Participation in Development*) to do focused work on governance and development. It has now metamorphosed into a *Strategic Governance Organisation* that aims to strengthen governance of development and demonstrate governance centered models of implementation.

The period of last strategic review (2010-11 to 2015-16), ended in 2016 and a fresh strategic review and planning exercise to take stock and to explore future strategic directions was commissioned in late 2016. Since the current operating environment is much more volatile than in the past, it was decided that time frame for the next plan be shorter, limited to the next 3-4 years, considering various possible scenarios that could play out in near future.

 The exercise was divided into 2 parts: Based on what had been recommended in the previous strategic review, assessment of work done by different entities within Samarthan in last five years to understand the outcomes achieved, their effectiveness, fulfillment of core values/ mandate, barriers and strengths in delivering in those areas; Strategic planning based on an

analysis of the environment, assessment of donors, governments and key stakeholders expectations, internal assessment of Samarthan staff and what similar organizations are doing to arrive at the strategic choices available to Samarthan for charting its future course.

Scope and Process of Review

The scope of strategic review included broadly looking at work done by Samarthan in recent years, staff's experience of working in different thematic areas, assessing the extent to which the organisation had achieve the Broad Strategic Goals identified internally by the team in the previous strategic plan and recommendations of the 2011-16 Strategic Review, impact of recent structural changes within the organisation (creation of different responsibility centers) and related changes in systems/ processes, analysis of the legal-policy environment related to Development Organizations and Governance, sectoral trends and opportunities in the major areas of Samarthan's engagement, including resource opportunities and constraints.

Some key questions that the review sought answers for were:

▶ How far has Samarthan been able to achieve the outcomes planned for 2010-15?

▶ Has restructuring resulted in better outcome achievements and more accountability? What are the achievements, successes and shifts observed?

▶ What is likely to be the operating environment for Samarthan and similar Development Organizations in next 3-4 years? What are the potential areas and funding opportunities, based on existing national/sub-national development priorities that are aligned to Samarthan's mandate and what scope does Samarthan have to contribute in these areas?

▶ How prepared is Samarthan in this changing development environment and what is its preparedness to change to respond to future changes? What more is required in terms of skills, competencies and systems for contributing significantly in the next few years?

▶ And lastly, what strategic opportunities are likely to arise that Samarthan can potentially harness and strengthen its position as a key Development Organisation?

The process for undertaking the review and arriving at recommendations on the suggested course of action for Samarthan included:

▶ Discussions with Samarthan's Senior Management, especially the Executive Director, to develop the scope for the assessment, understand experiences of working in the new structure and the broad areas of concern;

▶ Field visits to select project sites and group/ individual discussions with stakeholders in the field – Elected Representatives, community institutions, community members, frontline workers/ grassroots functionaries, district and sub- district level officials;

- ▶ Team level and Individual discussions with Samarthan staff in both the states- Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and self assessment exercises done with the teams of their strengths, weaknesses, achievements and desirable skill-sets;

- ▶ Discussions with other stakeholders- Donors, Senior Government Officials, Board Members, NGO Partners and Sector experts.

- ▶ Review of Literature that included select publication of Samarthan, annual reports of Samarthan and other similar development organisations, key policies and programmes to understand the broad sector trends, reports and policies on CSR.

The findings of the review were shared with internal stakeholders at 3 different stages of the review process, to receive feedback and suggestions for further them and for further probing/ unpacking some areas were potentially relevant for Samarthan. The initial findings were first shared with senior Samarthan staff to see if they resonated with the views of the larger team and to get feedback on the interim assessment. After revisions these were shared with Samarthan's Board of Trustees for getting strategic inputs and guidance on the future roadmap. Based on changes suggested and views expressed by the Board, findings and modified recommendations (including alternate roadmaps based on potential future scenarios), were shared with Samarthan staff during their annual review meeting, to seek views and also to explore which scenario offered the *best-fit* for Samarthan, considering the need to remain relevant and effective.

This part reviews the work done by Samarthan and the various legal entities (Centers) within its fold, over the last review period and broadly assesses its performance in terms of roles, functions, effectiveness, strengths and limitations based on _Broad Strategic Goals_ identified by the team during the last strategic review and planning exercise in 2010-11 as well as its expresses vision, mission and its stated core values.

Vision statement- Every citizen contributes meaningfully in shaping democratic State and enjoys benefits based on the principles of equality and equity.

Mission- Promote and support participatory governance for equity and inclusion in development processes by capacity building, generating evidences and advocating the perspective of the most marginalized for enriched democracy

Core Values–Participation, Equity and inclusion- by strengthening local processes, empowering community and community institutions, raising stakeholder's capacities, undertaking evidence based and policy advocacy.

▶ **Redefine Engagement on Governance, Accountability and Transparency**

Samarthan has continued working on the issues of social accountability and transparency through various projects related to strengthening the process of social audit process in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act –MGNREGA and has been training social audit facilitators for the state as well as facilitating actual social audits to ensure transparency in implementation and accrual of benefits for the community. Apart from this it also ran courses on social audit for resource persons and staff of other CSOs.

It has also worked on strengthening public service delivery mainly by supporting implementation of MPs Public Services Guarantee Act, creating access to services and entitlements through the creation of local cadres of service providers- _Gram soochna and e-mitras_ for communities in rural areas, apart from working on the issue of rights and entitlements mainly in supporting communities to access their right to employment (under MGNREGA) and for claiming forest rights (under the Forest Rights Act, 2006) through consistent engagement with communities under different projects.

The organisation has also supported bottom-up planning for ensuring that aspiration of local communities find a place in development plans by working with state cadres and communities to strengthen local engagement and improved governance. It has supported communities in planning under IPPE, BRGF, NRLM and decentralized planning exercise of Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP).

While the aspiration of the previous strategic plan was also to engage more intensively with the District Planning Committees (DPCs), commissions like State Finance Commission, State Election Commission and State Information Commission, apart from Development Authorities

created for PVTGs- lack of a conducive environment, weak institutional capacities of some of these agencies prevented on-boarding and engagement with many of them.

▶ **Scale-up Application of Participatory Governance**

Samarthan has been able to apply the principles of participatory governance in most projects and has supported the strengthening of community monitoring and planning processes in programs like MGNREGA, National Health Mission-NHM, Labour budgeting and IPPE planning under MGNREGA apart from Gram Sabha planning for the Schedule V (PESA) areas of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

It was also able to develop, test and demonstrate replicable social accountability tools like Community Score Cards and Citizens Report Cards for rural and urban sanitation and the education sector. It also worked to capacitate and nurture strong community institutions under various projects –like the School Management Committees- SMCs, Village Water and Sanitation Committees-VWSCs, Watershed Development Committees. Creation of strong community institutions has been the hallmark of Samarthan's approach and the organisation has continued to ensure strong, vocal and assertive institutions in all the communities that it works with.

A lot of scope still exists for branding and widely disseminating these tools and taking these learnings of seeking community feedback through regular community engagement to its other areas of work and for advocating their use with the government.

▶ **Improved quality of evidence based advocacy**

Space and scope for proactive policy advocacy seems to have come down in recent years and this has impacted the organisations work on generating policy evidences and undertaking advocacy with policy makers. Nevertheless, Samarthan has been generating grassroots learning and evidences from the field in the areas of Sanitation, Watershed/ Natural Resource Management and Service Delivery. It has also been able to use the opportunity created by engaging with Madhya Pradesh State Social Audit Society for further strengthening the process of social audit and enhancing its outreach, apart from supporting nearly 10 Gram Panchayats in reflecting their felt needs in the plans for *Sansad Adarsh Gram Vikas Yojana* prepared for these GPs.

From time to time, as opportunities have presented themselves, Samarthan has also shared learnings of grassroots engagement with the development partners and government at different forums and has in recent years also forayed into generating and presenting evidences on urban governance with urban local bodies with good success.

▶ **Strengthened CSO capacities on governance- grassroots groups & networks**

This was the piece that Samarthan initially started with two decades ago. Over the years lack interest among donors in improving capacities of smaller organisations and consequent low availability of resources for continuing it led to a gradual decrease in capacity creation of CSO and developing issue based networks. Also very few small organisations are willing to invest time in improving their social and managerial capacities unless there are tangible opportunities in sight.

Samarthan has still continued this work by supporting CSOs in developing skills for conducting social audit and also nurtured/ mentored several Community based Organisations (CBOs) like collectives of youth, MGNREGA labour unions., *Panchayat Mahasanghs* and other local cadres for improving accountability, community ownership across its work in both the states.

▸ **Develop Resource Center on water, sanitation and Hygiene**

One of the strategic goal that Samarthan identified in its previous review and planning cycle was to develop a dedicated resource centre on water, sanitation and hygiene- WASH. C-EWASH, the Centre for Environment, Water, Sanitation and Health has taken over all work related to environment and WASH in the last few years and is successfully implementing projects in these sub-sectors. The center has also been able to raise some resources on its own; strengthening the overall implementation experience of the organisation and in the process has been generating evidence and providing better organizational understanding on implementation and governance challenges, especially in the area of WASH and NRM.

As the center matures and gathers more implementation experience, it will need to create its own unique governance-based implementation models across sub-sectors. These models will need to draw upon Samarthan's core values- by firmly embedded community processes in planning and monitoring, ensuring convergence and high accountability and transparency by nurturing strong community institutions through intensive social mobilization and high quality capacity building. This will need to be packaged as Samarthan's signature model that could be taken to donors and governments. The organisation experimented with district wide approaches on ODF and supported the district administration in making Kanker (Chhattisgarh) and Sehore Districts (Madhya Pradesh) Open Defecation free.

Also generating evidences and bringing out issues and challenges from the field for advocacy and to generate high quality research should be the responsibility of the center in the coming years, as its contribution to making Samarthan a regional thought leader on these issues.

▸ **Deepened engagement with SC/ST communities**

Samarthan has continued its engagement with vulnerable communities owing to its presence and work in- tribal dominated areas of Chhattisgarh, Panna district in Madhya Pradesh and dalit communities in Sehore district (MP). Continuing its work on PESA, it has supported awareness generation and village planning in scheduled areas of both states apart from

creating awareness on and supporting communities in claiming their individual and community rights under the Scheduled Tribes (and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers) Recognition of Forest Rights Act 2006. While supporting planning and other processes in these geographies, Samarthan has also been strengthening Gram Sabhas in these areas to access individual and community rights over NTFPs and other forest resources.

Work on mainstreaming gender issues in WASH and NRM has also been done, although it needs much more refinement and strengthening in the years to come.

There is, however, scope for more focused and consistent work with vulnerable communities, which have been the key constituency of Samarthan for several years and since galvanizing resources for constituency focused work is increasingly a challenge, Samarthan will need to integrate this in its existing work and projects more strongly. At the policy level, there is also scope for bringing out evidences of social exclusion and also tracking and analysing budgets (including Tribal Sub-Plan and Special Component Plan) and schemes for their impacts on these constituencies.

▶ **Expanded reach and influence on urban governance and migrant workers**

Samarthan forayed into urban governance in the recent years and had good experiences of engaging with the municipalities in both the states. Its work on issues of urban sanitation with local bodies in Sehore, Raisen, Kumhari was able to get good traction from the elected representatives in these areas and holds promise for the future.

Rich experience was also generated by working on safe migration in MP and CG both in the destination as well as in the origin. The organisation was able to demonstrate its capacity to create unique models during its work on safe migration by involving PRIs in planning and implementation of safe migration plans to bring both validity and accountability to the system. Apart from this it also used its tremendous convening power to bring-in key stakeholders around this program- PRIs, government, local administration, police, private contractors/middlemen, banks and skill development institutions– for delivering entitlements, creating financial literacy, enhancing skills and forming collectives of migrant workers.

Impacts and experiences of this program show what Samarthan is capable of, if all organizational strengths that it possesses are applied in a programme. These experiences show that there is scope for more intensive as well as extensive work both in the area of migration as well as urban governance.

▶ **Delivering through the New Structure**

During the previous strategic plan, 3 centres were proposed to be established within Samarthan as distinct responsibility centers, with separate mandates so that they could undertake more focussed work and develop expertise in those areas over a period of time. The C-SAAP i.e. Centre for Social Accountability and Addressing Poverty was established to

specialise in participatory governance. The C-EWASH i.e. Centre for Environment, Water, Sanitation and Health was established to specialise in sector specific areas with a focus on implementation. The Chhattisgarh Samarthan for Participatory Development (CG-SPD) was based on geographic and administrative, rather than a thematic focus.

All three centres have established their independent functioning as centres and are headed by Programme Directors. Samarthan seems to have clearly demarcated areas and responsibilities to each center based on clear work allocation principles. As a result all centers were found to have a high degree of accountability, and the current structure was found to be appreciated by most staff, for whom this has meant greater clarity on their roles and responsibilities within the centre. Accountability also seems to have filtered down to the lowest level in each center, which probably was not present in the earlier structure. The centers also seem to be gradually moving towards developing as independent cost centers and to that extent there is a strong emphasis within all three on mobilising resources for sustaining themselves. This has pros as well as cons, since these centers are still nascent and need to establish themselves more firmly on the ground. There is smooth coordination and mutual support across centers as is evident from their coming together on various assignments to deliver as one.

On the flip side there is still high dependence of all the 3 centers on the Executive Director for programmatic guidance, donor engagement/ coordination as well as for resource mobilization and still have a some way to go before establishing themselves as independent centers, which will need to be done in coming years.

1. Centre for Environment, Water, Sanitation and Health

C-EWASH, based out of Samarthan implementation lab in Sehore has started functioning as an independent center and has taken over almost all implementation related work of Samarthan across geographies in Madhya Pradesh. It has been able to develop some expertise in implementing Sanitation (both rural as well as urban) and Watershed related projects. Since its creation the center has implemented a few watershed projects for ITC in close collaboration with the districts and worked on rural and urban sanitation with support from Water-Aid to promote a district wide approach on sanitation for strengthening of systems and institutions involved in implementing SBMG.

Apart from these centers, Samarthan had also promoted Samarth in Participatory Action (SIPA) a few years ago, to become the implementation wing of Samarthan. As per Samarthan's plan, C- EWASH is to be merged with SIPA, to function as an independent organisation specialising in implementation.

Since, increasingly, more donor and government resources are available for implementation as compared to other functions like research, capacity building or advocacy, this center/ SIPA will have to take up an important role of generating resources for implementation as well as developing Samarthan's governance-centered, signature implementation models across thematic areas of its functioning- health, sanitation, watershed/ environment.

2. *Centre for Social Accountability and Addressing Poverty*

The newest center among the three, C-SAAP has got a separate identity only in the past one year and is gradually evolving as an independent unit. Since this is closely related to Samarthan's traditional domain, its portfolio is wide and ranges from work related to system strengthening, accountability, research and documentation, capacity building apart from handling consulting assignments for the organisation. The organisation has also been supporting other centers in research studies, assessments and also taking help from the other two centers for generating evidences, data collection. The center is working on diverse issues of accountability, transparency and participation in governance with several donors and district administrations.

As the center develops it will also need to support other centers, especially SIPA/C-EWASH in embedding principles of participatory governance in the implementation related work that they take up.

3. *Chhattisgarh -Samarthan for Participatory Development*

CG-SPD has a mixed portfolio of work related to implementation, capacity building as well as advocacy. Since its creation, CGSPD has worked with multiple donors (WaterAid, International Laobur Organisation, Micro Nutrient Initiative, NABARD, CG-SACS, CARITAS, GIZ) in areas like Water-Sanitation, Safe migration, health and nutrition, strengthening of community institutions, apart from tribal issues (FRA-PESA) and environment (environmental benefits of MGNREGA). The center has also worked as the State Training Resource center for NACO and has been sustaining itself as a separate identity.

While CG-SPD has slowly been establishing its identity within the organisation, it has the advantage of being in a state that has dearth of quality and credible CSOs and fills the vital space that civil society in the states have to fulfill. To that extent there is opportunity as well as responsibility that the center has to fulfill.

Corresponding with the structural changes in the organisation, due delegation of functions and powers (financial and programmatic) has also taken place to the centers to help them perform independently. This has also been accompanied with flexibility to them to innovate, test and independently respond to situations. With clearly defined roles, it also means that there is accountability among centers for the tasks/functions assigned to them. As a result, whether premature or not, there is healthy competition among centers both for expanding their portfolio and also in terms of raising resources for their respective entities.

This new structure now needs formal systems of a larger organisation for horizontal learning/cross- learning and sharing of experiences and practices among themselves including documenting these practices and experiences for internal dissemination. There needs to now be a stronger emphasis on collating and generating evidences across geographies,

documenting stories/impacts so that staff is appraised of what is happening within the organisation.

The size of the organisation has also grown in recent years, with its independent support functions- this requires a system of handholding, so that new staff can be acquainted with the values that the organisation stands for, taken through the journey that Samarthan has undertaken to come to this stage and also be oriented on the programmatic approach that the organisation wants to take in all its work- and mentoring to help develop second rung leadership within these centers. This will ensure that there is sync among new staff with the original organizational values.

Changes over the Years

Before we summarize Samarthan's in the past few years, it is worthwhile to see what has changed in Samarthan in the last decade and a half and how. The matrix below captures these changes. Is it important to note that what is presented below is reflective of changes that the organisation has undergone and is also symptomatic of changes that the overall environment for Development Organizations has witnessed during this period.

THEN	NOW
Large scale work on Capacity Building, Research and Advocacy	Larger portfolio related to implementation, only project related capacity building and some outside research.
Creating, Nurturing, Supporting CSO/PRI Networks, Campaigns, Advocacy Groups	Scaled down CSO support and networks, low level of engagement as solidarity groups are becoming dormant
Participation and Governance visible and central elements across work	Not so visible now in the projects, work is more in a project mode
Power relations- Strong partnership with state governments & local administration	Weaker partnership, now working more for government than with it
Donor support was feeding into Samarthan's agenda	Now Samarthan is contributing towards donor agenda
Strong staff identity with, and understanding of organizational values	Understanding missing in cases among new and recently recruited staff
Strong organizational stamp on every work taken up- RTI, NREGA, advocacy, planning, entitlements & research	Stamp is not as prominent in implementation work- community led, inclusive, converged models
Strong link between field experience and	Weakening link for evidence based knowledge

knowledge creation	generation, though more evidences and experiences being generated

▸ **Summing up**

Samarthan has been able to achieve the strategic goals that it had set up for itself in the last review, though more intensive and deeper engagement will be required in some of the areas to remain the thought leader in the area of inclusive governance.

As a result of the outcomes that it has been able to showcase, there has been a consistent rise in the donor portfolio as well as in the resources mobilized by the organisation in recent years. In the review period the number of donors increased from 20 to 28 – a good sign in terms of not being dependent on a single or few donors, while annual resource availability has consistently increased from Rs 5.26 crores to 8.37 crores. The project portfolio has a good spread in terms of donors and number of projects, though as has been the larger sectoral trend, resource per donor has shrink. Thus the portfolio includes a number of small assignments, meaning high project management costs per assignment for the organisation. Having said this, there is wide appreciation that mobilizing resources from government and donors for governance has become increasingly difficult and alternate sources and strategies need to be devised to continue doing quality work.

Attracting quality human resource continues to be a challenge for the social sector and Samarthan is not insulated from it, though there is no unexceptional exodus from senior and middle management levels of the organisation like many similar development organisations have faced in recent years.

Samarthan's Core Capacities have changed over time in the following manner:

- ▸ Use of participatory approaches in planning and implementation have got expanded in recent years.
- ▸ Capacity building opportunities for CSOs have come down. There is a greater focus on CBO/Panchayat capacity building on various thematic issues, WASH, Watershed, health and less on governance *per se*.
- ▸ Research based advocacy has decreased as a tool for policy advocacy, primarily owning to lower appetite of policy makers to engage on policy issues with civil society.
- ▸ Generating evidences and bringing out grassroots voices on higher platforms of policy making has remained constant over the years, though it needs to increase in proportion with the current scale of work.
- ▸ Pure Implementation based projects and initiatives have significantly gone up while pure governance and action research related work has reduced.

It is worthwhile to note that though Governance Sector as a whole seems to be shrinking in India, Samarthan has continued to retain its position as regional leader and enjoys a high patronage of the state government as well as donors in this area. The organisation also

continues to enjoy high credibility among stakeholders- donors, government, other development organisations, local bodies and community- and enjoys immense convening power and goodwill in the social development sector.

There is high expectation of traditional donors from Samarthan, owing to its stature, quality of work, high ethical standards as well as its convening power.

PART II- STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Samarthan has been trying to constantly innovate and adapt to the changing operating environment to stay relevant and to respond to the mandate it has set for itself. Before setting out to make recommendations on the possible options for Samarthan in the coming 3-4 years, it is important to take note of the environment in which development organisations today are operating, opportunities and constraints they offer and what is currently being done by similar organisations to adapt to this environment.

COMPLEXITIES OF THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

National and State Governments

Development resources available with government under various programmes have grown at the same time as resources from donors have come down. As a result, from GO- NGO partnership that was the hallmark of previous few decades, government and local administrations now prefer to work independent of the civil society or at best with like-minded, co-opted or technically specialized agencies that offer specific services.

This has also been accompanied with the creation of outsourced Project Management/ Technical Support Units within departments and ministries to support implementation and monitoring of schemes handled by these agencies and does not need to look outside for support in areas where they were traditionally weak- capacity building, social development, monitoring etc.

On the other hand, the softer side of development- issue of inclusion, participation, transparency and equity- has taken a backseat, with greater emphasis on visible/ tangible development often overlooking the importance of governance.

Governments arrogance of scale and resource is high since the last 5-6 years and as result it has started considering itself to be the repository of all specialist skills- participation, community management, social capacity building. Vending and contracting skills, through such outsourced units, rather than partnering and engaging with civil society has become the general trend across state departments and national ministries.

Development Context of the States of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

The States of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are large, with MP as the second largest in terms of geograohical area and home to the largest Scheduled Tribe population in terms of absolute numbers and CG created to give voice to the millions of tribals and hundred of tribal communities that inhabit the state. Over the last few years both states have witnessed a high GSDP growth rate (MP of nearly 11.52 and CG of 8.64 percent)[1]. While MP has taken significant strides in the area of agriculture registering a consistent double digit growth for last 5 years, streamlining public service delivery through enactment of a right to public services act

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[1] Source : India Bran Equity Foundation- IBEF July 2017

and innovating on e-governance initiatives to improve access to services;, CG has made a name for itself in creating transparency and efficiency in delivering services and entitlements like PDS, digitization of land records and also e-tracking of institutional deliveries.

Status of Decentralised Governance in the two states

At one time, undivided Madhya Pradesh was one of the most progressive states in terms of legislating for proactive local governance and decentralisation, but over the years, and after its division, both states have undone most of the far-reaching legislations that had been enacted when they were united.

Undivided MP was the first to enact its state Panchayat Raj Act in 1993 to make PRIs and Municipalities the institutions of local self-governance; Madhya Pradesh Zila Yojana Samiti Adhiniyam, 1995 provided powers to DPC to get district plans prepared, raise resources and monitor programmes and schemes falling in the District and Panchayat Sector; its subsequent amendments in 1997 and 1999 gave Gram Sabha the powers to plan for local development, manage resources and expenditure, certify utilisation of funds by GP under various plans programs and projects in scheduled areas as well as non-scheduled areas and the Madhya Pradesh Zila Yojna Samiti Adhiniyam, 1999 developed the concept of Zila Sarkar or District Government and gave the administrative control over all district level departmental cadres to the DPC. Subsequently, both states rolled back all the progress achieved both through amendments of the State PRI Acts[2] or series of Executive Orders and the focus has not shifted on visible, hardware related development.

Development Priorities of the states

Madhya Pradesh Vision 2018 and Sankalp resolution 2010

Development priorities in Madhya Pradesh are guided by its 70 point Sankalp resolution and its Vision Document 2018. The key development priorities identified by the state and for achievement of which the state administration is working include:

1. Reduction in infant mortality rate from 72 to 50 per thousand and mother mortality rate from 335 to 225 per lakh
2. Maximise use of information technology to ensure transparency, accountability and sensitive administration
3. Achieve and maintain 100% enrollment, highest levels of retention and to continuously improve the quality of education across institutions.
4. Develop a vibrant and robust Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) System to reduce malnutrition.
5. Monitor and manage improvement in quality of education.
6. Improve and expand physical access to preventive and curative services and provide a guarantee for identified health services.

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[2] Madhya Pradesh Panchayati Raj Sanshodhan Adhiniyam 2004 withdrew powers vested on Gram Sabha and DPC through the previous legislations including the power of DPC to sanction funds, manage transfers of district level line departments and other financial and administrative powers.

7. Empower women to become equal partner in the socio-economic development of the state.
8. Expand opportunities and ensure access for all disadvantaged sections to achieve inclusive growth through Capacity building of landless, disadvantaged groups for economic empowermentthrough targeted skill development programmes, redesigning programmes for improving access and gap filling for qualitative improvement and developing social and political leadership through training and exposure.
9. Engage PRIs, communities and NGOs to organize awareness campaigns to disseminate information
10. Facilitate wide spread access to key public services "anywhere, anytime" through transparent and accountable governance.
11. Improve public services involving face-to-face interaction between government employees and citizens for more sensitized delivery of services and benchmarking quality of service for citizens through defining specific standards of service and instituting strict penalties for service deficiency.
12. Seek citizen feedback on public service delivery through online and SMS based systems.
13. Streamlining inter-departmental coordination to ensure convergence and collaboration to reduce transaction time.
14. Promote an ICT environment through rapid data and e-gov application sharing and develop a common data repository by linking databases of all departments based on unique ID numbers.

Chhattisgarh Vision 2022
1. Be the leader in transparent and accountability-based governance in the country.
2. Provide Improved and affordable healthcare facility to every citizen of the state.
3. Be the number one state with highest literacy rates and well spread quality education for all through 100 percent literacy and 100% enrollment in schools.
4. More number of quality higher & Technical institutions and a primary school within every 5 kilometers
5. Improve distance learning with the help of Information and Communication Technology
6. Develop tribal areas by creating a Separate Development Fund through proper execution and monitoring
7. Capacity building of Tribal communities in trade and handicrafts and provide market linkages. Establish Rural Business Hubs and improve livelihoods by promoting forest Industries
8. Reduce population Below Poverty Line (BPL) to 10% of the total population of the state.
9. Ensure proper housing, sanitation & drinking water for all citizens of the state
10. Empower local bodies and panchayat's to take decisions through decentralisation.
11. Greater involvement of people for developing participatory mechanisms for planning, delivery and monitoring of public services.

12. Implementing e –governance modules in all aspects of administration in the state

As is obvious from above, while both states are promoting e-governance to improve transparency and accountability of systems, greater emphasis in both states is on tangible development and less attention is given to the software side- governance, capacity creation and development and also steps for moving towards greater participation and decentralization. Samarthan could identify some priorities of both the states that are in sync with its core mandate- like work on transparency, accountability and participation and work closely with the state governments to further that mandate.

Social Sector

The social sector has been characterized by reduction in donors and quantum of donor funds available to development organisations to undertake process-oriented work. Grant-based funding has more or less stopped completely and what are available now are 'projectised' funds that are conditional on achieving quick outputs within the project timeframe. Despite these changes and reduction in donors and their resources, donor-dependence among civil society organisations still remains high and this seems to be the time to think beyond traditional donors for mobilizing resources.

Some large donors in the country are also attempting to change the development paradigm by encouraging their civil society partners to replace traditional social development approaches with market development approaches that aim to create market-based models for correcting market failures.

Cancellation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act - FCRA Licenses of nearly 20,000 of 33,000 national NGOs could be considered both a threat and an opportunity. This could help clean the sector of organisations that work as contractors in the business of development and bring back the credibility that the sector as a whole, and well intentioned institutions in particular, have lost after being outnumbered by such agencies.

New competitors for civil society are the large and small consulting firms that are more suited for the contracted and bidding based work that is emerging. CSR foundations and other entities have also entered the sector as implementing organisations and have not only been implementing internally funded projects, but are also negotiating with government for larger implementation role by leveraging their CSR resources. While this trend has been slightly arrested as well will see in the next section, it has further constrained the space in which development organisations operated.

Opportunities with the Corporate Sector

In August 2013, the Government of India revised the Companies Act and added a new Section 135 to the Act, which made it mandatory for all Corporate bodies- private limited or public-with a net worth of Rs 500 crore or a turnover of Rs 1,000 crore or net profit of Rs 5 crore to

spend at least 2 percent of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on socially responsible activities. A lot of euphoria was generated in the initial years as it was expected that nearly 16000 companies will be eligible to make mandatory CSR spending in the country and this was estimated to release about Rs 12,000-18,000 crores annual into the sector and especially benefit credible and experienced NGOs that had the expertise to use these resources effectively.

The dust has settled now and CSR has not augured as well for the civil society as was made out to be. Many companies started their in-house NGOs, Trusts, Funds and Section 25 Companies to manage these funds, several did not spend on CSR, some found convenient NGOs to work with – effectively little resource has flowed into the sector by way of CSR, mostly from larger firms that had traditionally been investing in social development.

KPMG's India CSR Survey of Top 100 companies (2016) throws up interesting trends that hold promise for Samarthan. A) Health Sanitation and Education have been the favourite sectors for CSR and account for nearly 63.74 percent of the spends, followed by rural development and environment. B) Companies doing CSR directly has come down from 14 percent to 9 percent in 2016, suggesting that they have realized that non- profit sector needs specialized skills that may not necessarily be found in corporate bodies. C) Similarly, companies that exclusively implemented their CSR in partnership with external agency has increased against last year and there is an upward trend of working with non-profits and moving towards developing partnerships. D) CSRs are also showing some consolidation and gradual understanding of the social sector with number of projects coming down from earlier 1249 to 838- a more focused approach. Among reasons for non-compliance with CSR policy, majority of the companies cited difficulty in identifying appropriate partners for undertaking their CSR-suggesting that good Companies are also looking for suitable partners.

State owned Public Sector Enterprises are also required to make CSR spending and have large budgets. Estimates show that the CSR budget of 12 Central PSU's operating in the oil, gas and power sector alone is more than Rs 1500 crores and work with lesser conditionalities as compared to private corporations, though some have compulsions of working only in geographies around their establishments. A large number of such CSRs operate in both the states and could be potential partners for Samarthan in coming years.

Opportunities with the Government

While it has become increasingly challenging to work with and access programme resources for social development and governance related work, there are still some opportunities that can be explored for furthering the agenda of participatory governance by Samarthan.

▸ New guidelines of major programs like NRDWP, SBMG, PMKSY, NRLM, NGMIP, NHP are now emphasizing the need to develop participatory sectoral plans and promote community models of implementation- an area of expertise for Samarthan.

- Local, decentralized planning is being promoted under the Gramoday se Bharat Uday campaign, Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) as well as for the award received under the finance commission awards.
- Scope for strengthening e-governance initiatives like, NGeP/ Digital India, Panchayat Enterprise suite (set of 10 software applications- Planplus, PRIAsoft, National Panchayat Portal, Actionsoft, Asset Directory, Social audit, and Trainings mgmt), including capacity building of GP functionaries and elected representatives.
- Supporting initiatives for promoting transparency and efficiency by using e-governance for creating decision support systems for GPs and supporting them in using this IT interface.
- Peri-urban spaces have opened up in recent years and governance in these areas throws up opportunities through the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM). Globally also this space is warming up and not many agencies in India understand or specialize in peri-urban.

What are Similar Organisations Doing?

As part of the review work of some similar organisations was also reviewed to see what organisations similar to Samarthan are doing in the fast changing environment. These organisations were Unnati, CYSD, SSK. Work of some other high impact organisations like CBGA, FES, PRADAN, CSE, PRATHAM and PAC was also reviewed to see what has helped them carve a niche in their domain of work.

The broad trend among similar organisations was that most were gradually moving into areas other than governance, with diversification into education, disaster management, skill building, livelihoods and agriculture. Some had created a niche in large scale implementation like CYSD while others like SSK have been able to expand their capacity building portfolio through closer partnership with state governments.

Thus, implementation on scale by retaining emphasis on core governance issues- creating social accountability through strong community institutions- seems to have become the preferred mode of working for many organisations similar to Samarthan.

Organisations like PRADAN and FES have kept their core mandate central to all work, adopted high performance metrics that promote high quality and rigorous implementation. Their ability to create strong community institutions, uncompromised focus on core mandate-livelihoods in case of PRADAN and issue of Commons in case of FES has helped these organisations to create a niche for themselves.

High quality research and wider dissemination has been the strategy adopted by CSE & PRATHAM for bringing attention to issues and for attracting funders. Their ability to create a package of high quality, credible, cutting edge research and attractive communication and advocacy around issues (environment in case of CSE and education for PRATHAM) for impactful dissemination has been behind the success of these organisations.

Ability of PAC or CSDS/CPR (ICSSR institutions) to undertake effective social research and generate high quality policy research on governance and accountability along with their ability to develop high quality knowledge products and tools on participatory governance and social accountability has steered these three organisations.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR SAMARTHAN

Considering the picture of the operating environment and opportunities within painted above, and the fact that governance does not hold as much glamour as it did 10 years back, there are 3 likely scenarios and strategic options that seem to be available to Samarthan.

Strategic Option I
Pure Governance related work: *Back to Basics*
  ▸ Bring down the size of the organisation, with staff skilled in governance and related areas. Do focused work on core governance issues- Panchayats, Rights and Entitlement, gender, equity and inclusion.
  ▸ Develop field based governance models, undertake high quality research and document evidence/ experiences emerging from the field- Samarthan's as well as partners.
  ▸ Revive the traditional policy advocacy, capacity building and CSO networking streams
  ▸ Weave constituency focused work with SCs in MP (Bundelkhand) and STs in Chhattisgarh in all existing programs.

Strategic Option II
Pure implementation: *Bring in a New Paradigm* (Drop the traditional baggage of governance from the portfolio)
  ▸ Create a large sized organisation that is required for large implementation agencies
  ▸ Seek out donors that support large scale implementation work
  ▸ Undertake large-scale implementation in WASH, NRM, Health and other new areas
  ▸ Develop systems that are needed by large organisations - human resource, internal and program monitoring, greater financial and programmatic delegation.

Strategic Option III
Mix of Governance & Implementation: *Status Quo*
  ▸ Continue the existing approach with some refinement
  ▸ Aim to create innovative, governance-centric signature implementation models that reflect the core values of Samarthan
  ▸ Derive governance based learning's from existing experience, backed with quality research
  ▸ Take up these evidences for policy advocacy at the state, regional and national level

▶ Keep working on governance issues as and when opportunities arise and undertake related advocacy.

These strategic options were shared with Samarthan's staff during their annual review meeting in June 2017 and the last option was the preferred choice of most staff, considering the present capacities and the likely environment of the sector in coming years. They articulated that this option will help the organisation retain its identity and also to adapt to external changes. Staff were of the view that with changed times Samarthan will be respected and its advocacy with government and local administrations will bear fruit only if the organisation chooses to dirty its hands in implementation and demonstrates work. Staff also felt that there is enough scope in the current approach to further mainstream core values and integrate governance in existing work.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

I. *Deepen Field Presence Through Implementation Projects*
Samarthan had promoted Samarth in Participatory Action (SIPA) to gradually take over all implementation related work of Samarthan. SIPA has completed most legal formalities (12 A, FCRA, 80 G) and has an annual turnover of more than one crore currently. This entity will need to be strengthened in programme and financial management, monitoring and human resource so that expansion of programme portfolio becomes easier. C-EWASH, with more or less similar mandates, will need to be subsumed within SIPA and its resources transferred to the latter. SIPA will then be able to attract grants around the water, sanitation and environment.

Cautious and calibrated expansion of implementation projects in this phase, to allow the organisation to prepare for large scale implementation, will be important. Considering the need to expand implementation in areas allied to Samarthan's existing work, the following linear streams emerge for subsequent expansion that could be explored by Samarthan for the next phase of work:

▶ Rural Sanitation→ Urban Sanitation→ SLWM→ Water Quality and Access → Community managed Water Supply Schemes
▶ Rural Sanitation→ Health linkage→ Capacity building of frontline workers/ functionaries
▶ Watershed→ skill development→ Collectives/SHGs/ FPOs→ Agriculture based livelihoods
▶ Watershed→ NRM→ Adaptive Planning→ Climate Resilient Agriculture
▶ Watershed→ NRM→ FRA→ Skill development → Forest based livelihoods

The organisation will need to demonstrate effective models of participatory development in the above areas to attempt large scale replication. The field expansion of SIPA will need to be

synchronized with Samarthan's existing field presence and also expand in areas where there is a large potential to demonstrate impact on sanitation, water and environment, in both the states.

It will also need to blend strategies to work with PRIs for institutionalization of programmes as well as for their long term sustainability, to create a strong governance imprint on these programmes. The field based governance issues identified during implementation of programmes will also need to be highlighted and advocated with the district administration, state and national level policy makers.

II.   *Retain Identity as a Strategic Governance Organisation*

Samarthan's core identity among internal and external stakeholders is inextricably linked with governance and participation. Staff also recognizes these as non-negotiable values that Samarthan and they stand for. It is therefore important that Samarthan maintains its high credibility and specialisation in the area of participatory governance, irrespective of the areas in which it decided to expand.

Promotion of decentralisation with PRIs has been a core area of work for Samarthan which needs to continue with deeper engagement and specialisation. Some of the current experiments in developing tools of social accountability and transparency viz. Social Audits, Citizen's Report Card, Community Score Cards, Public Hearings need to be applied with local adaptation in diverse geographic locations and sectors and developed as organizational tools for wider dissemination and use. It will need to create a governance agenda in all ongoing programmes viz. water governance, sanitation governance, natural resource/ forest governance, by designing tools of accountability and transparency.

Considering that many donors are not keen to support purely governance related work, it is likely that the governance portfolio will further shrink over time. Since sustaining work on governance needs high quality specialist skills in research and capacity building on participatory approaches, Samarthan will need to develop these capacities, both for fulfilling needs within the organisation and also to provide such specialist services to external clients like large size NGOs, Government programmes/ departments and donors.

While expanding the implementation portfolio, Samarthan will also need to continue lab-experimenting with models of participatory governance in the existing geographies, so that new field based models emerge. For this it may need to attract grants where smaller NGOs become collaborative partners for field experimentation or build sites for field experimentation on its own. If resources are unavailable for this work, some funds could also be deployed by Samarthan using its core resources to sustain these 'experimental sites'.

Long standing initiatives for strengthening PRI networks has been sustained over the years with much financial support. There is a need to expand networks to highlight issues of decentralisation so that dialogue with the policy makers can be organised inviting network representatives. There is also a need to create forums for community engagement and design

large scale campaigns viz. on attainment of SDGs, community monitoring of various programmes etc. C-SAAP will need to put energy in reviving and developing such network as a robust, resource rich collective having wide membership and clear action plan.

Samarthan will also need to continue its constituency focused work with SC and STs both in Madhya Pradesh (Bundelkhand and Mahakoshal regions) and in Chhattisgarh (Northern and Central regions) where it has been working for some time now, especially around issues of exclusion and equity, migration, rights and entitlements.

III.   Strengthen Identities and Independence Of Centers

While the 3 centers have grown in quick time and have started working on their respective mandates, their dependence on senior management for critical functions needs to be addressed, so that they start performing as independent entities. While C-EWASH is planned to become part of SIPA (and hopefully the transition will be completed in the next phase), the identity of these 3 entities- SIPA/C-EWASH, CSAAP and CG-SPD- will need to be formalised as separate responsibility centers, complete with independent financial, HR and monitoring functions and resource mobilisation/ business development strategies.

As is needed for large organisations, along with creating distinct identities, Samarthan will also need to define organisation wide internal metrics to benchmark work and to guide performance of individual as well as projects. This will need to go hand in hand with developing internal monitoring and quality oversight mechanisms to ensure that projects are delivering as per internal benchmarks/ bars set by the organisation. Systems of monitoring and programme planning will need to be institutionalised and principles of collaborative work and resource sharing.

IV.   Prepare Human Resource for Changed Roles and Matrix Functions

The current operative environment desired highly specialized capacities among staff if organisations aim to carve a niche for themselves. Samarthan would either have to hire new staff with specialized capacities to perform specialist roles or will have to develop these capacities among existing staff. This would need to be combined with their strong orientation on its *non-negotiable*-the core organisational values. Since there is a perceptible difference in the understanding of staff of these core values, strong grounding of all staff and new recruitments is needed on the core organizational values and strengths in governance of development- participatory processes, social mobilisation, capacity building, inclusion, and facilitation of community institutions.

Systems for regular experience and knowledge sharing, horizontal learning among staff of different centers will also need to be developed and put in place so that there is uniform understanding of what is happening across centers.

Samarthan may also require dedicated and full time capacities in the area of social research and documentation, monitoring and evaluation and business development considering the changes it aspires for and to do purposeful and relevant work in the years to come. Internal monitoring capacities will also need to be created to keep track of multiple programmes being implemented across multiple geographies and through different centers to ensure quality in work. Second rung leadership also needs to be developed in all the centers to partially free the Center Directors for higher order work like business development and also to avoid high dependence on the Center Directors.

Capacities of staff also need to be created in such a manner that specialized skills could be sometimes deployed across different centers to perform short- term functions as well as to orient mentor staff on these roles.

V.   Create a Strong Governance Imprint in its Work

Samarthan now needs to gradually work on getting its agenda back into all its work and weave its own mandate into programs, both in design as well as implementation, rather than working entirely on the donor's mandate. During the review, staff shared that while this was integrated in the design of programmes, somehow it was overlooked during the implementation phase. This is where developing an internal metrics will come in handing.

Ensuring that core values of the organisation are central to their work and all programmes are developed to fulfill specific governance objectives needs to be the approach in coming years. Going beyond the project mandate to create an organisational imprint, by using its core strengths better, will help Samarthan carve out a niche for itself in the implementation sphere and will make it different from other implementing agencies. This also resonated with traditional donors of Samarthan who shared that a strong governance centric approach is what they look for when working with Samarthan and it seems to have diluted in recent years. Linking all programmes with the common thread of governance will also help Samarthan measure the extent to which it has been able to address its governance agenda as an organisation.

VI.   Explore testing inclusive, market development approaches

Reducing donors and grants, high competition and donor/corporate preference for working with organisations willing to test innovative, alternate approaches means that Samarthan will also need to do some out-of-the-box thinking to attract grants. Starting on a small scale, Samarthan could explore developing and incubating social enterprise models to service the needs of the sector in which it operates- Sanitation, Health and Environment- some of which can be mutually benefiting.

Ranging from promoting Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in its watersheds, collection and sales of NTFPs in Schedule V areas, to servicing the needs of sanitation markets- O&M of

school, AWC and public toilets, sale of night soil manure or waste water to farmers, to offering services for faecal sludge management to municipalities, there is wide scope for Samarthan to nurture and promote collectives and social enterprises through market based models that work on plugging market gaps and addressing market failures by offering paid services.

There is a huge gap in availability of Knowledge products-including user and training manuals, training modules for different stakeholders in different sectors and programmes/ schemes as well as use of usable, simple tools for community monitoring and establishing social accountability. Samarthan could also explore devoting some time and energies in developing high quality tools for receiving community feedback through a formal process and taking it up as advocacy with the policy makers in the state as well as nationally, as well as for allowing its subscription based use by others.

VII. Revamping Research and Advocacy functions

In its formative years, Samarthan produced some cutting edge research and undertook aggressive advocacy which brought the organisation and issues to the attention of policy-makers. Its work on rights and entitlements under MGNREGA and RTI also generated equal interest in recent years. Lack of substantive issues that interest policy makers today, lower attention to this function by the organisation has meant that action research based advocacy has been overlooked in the last phase.

As its canvas of implementation enlarges, Samarthan will need to generate more evidences from the field, document experiences, identify critical areas for research and come up with quality research products for posing to practitioners, other CSOs and policy makers. Proactive efforts to capture programme experiences, supported by high quality knowledge products and its wider dissemination will help Samarthan bring key issues to the table. With reducing appetite of policy makers for advocacy, as discussed above, Samarthan could explore forging partnerships with other development partners, research institutions and national organisations to jointly work on research on mutually agreed areas.

VIII. *Create and Strengthen Executive Director's Secretariat for Institutional development*
Multiple legal identities have become imperative to address legal, procedural and donor demands. Managing 3 separate entities within the umbrella of Samarthan means that it will be necessary to create a strong central oversight as well as have a core team to provide high capacity support to the Centers as and when required. Till the time the centers develop capacities to mobilise their own resources, they will also need support for business development as also for generating high quality research from their field areas. Development of metrics and tracking its achievement, if Samarthan wishes to deploy them to set internal quality standards, will also need to be done centrally for the organisation as a whole.

Strong monitoring and learning system will be required to generate evidences and to prepare advocacy and replication material based on learnings emerging from the field and also for

creating systems for internal sharing and external dissemination. An independent set-up needs to be envisaged to support various centres programmatically and through support functions -finance and administration.

While this was recommended during the last review also, the EDs times needs to be freed from higher order functions- undertaking strategic thinking, exploring long terms partnership, identifying key research areas and guiding them apart from doing business development for the organisation.

A small but high capacity secretariat can be created with the following skill-sets: institutional knowledge to offer help on support functions to centers- accounting, legal compliances, procurement and HR; skills for resource mobilisation, partner collaboration, business development and proposal writing for clients/donors, contract bids and donor reporting; deep governance and cross-sectoral understanding to guide centers on programmatic issues; ability to develop and manage systems for internal oversight and support external assessments/ evaluations; undertake high quality research in Samarthan's thematic areas of engagement.

In the initial stage, the secretariat could begin with small recruitment and take the services of staff from centers to provide support as and when required, it could also hire external consultants for short duration to provide support for specific needs.

Persons Met or Interacted With

- *Mr. R Parsuram, Chairman, MP State Election Commission*
- *Mr. Binu Arakal, Regional Manager-WaterAid, Madhya Pradesh*
- *Dr. Lalit Surjan, Chief Editor- Deshbandhu, Chhattisgarh*
- *Mr. Ravi Duggal, Country Coordinator / Senior Program Officer, International Budget Partnership (IBP)*
- *Mr. Giresh Mohan, ITC Ltd, Madhya Pradesh*
- *Ms. Davinder Uppal, Rtd. HoD of Makhanlal Chaturvedi Journalism University*
- *Mr. Amitabh Behar, National Foundation For India*
- *Mr. Joy Elamon, Director, Kerala Institute for Local Governance (KILA)*
- *Dr. Rajesh Tandon, President PRIA*
- *Mr. Ashok Singh, Director SSK*
- Dr. Rajen Gupta, Former Professions MDI Gurgaon
- *Mr. Ashis Mondal, Director and Managing Trustee, Action for Social Advancement (ASA)*
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