

STRATEGIC PROGRAMME GUIDANCE POLICY



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About the organisation

Society for Action in Community Health(SACH) is a voluntary and non-governmental organisation. It was founded in 1988 by a group of medical professionals who were actively engaged in practicing healthcare services with the State and Central government institutions. Initially focusing on policy advocacy to improve the access of the urban poor to public health services in India, Society for Action in Community Health (SACH) has grown to become one of the pioneering organisations for sustainable interventions not just for healthcare initiatives but also other tenets of urban-rural development. Recognizing the need to address the multifaceted dimensions of poverty and deprivation in a comprehensive manner, SACH sought to expand its engagement with communities and create models of excellence. While strengthening its health-centered interventions and expanding to addressing neuro disorders and disability, SACH also strengthened its focus on various spheres of development such as education, sanitation, drinking water, food & nutrition, natural resource management, renewable energy, climate change, sustainable development, etc. The major focus is to demonstrate tangible changes in helping the nation advance its Sustainable Development Goals.

Evolution of this Document:

This document is evolved based on the inputs received from the Strategic Planning meet at Kumarakam, Kerala from 19-21st May 2022. During this meet the current program domains were revisited and the same was compared with emerging needs and core expertise of SACH. Based on the deliberations and inputs received this Strategic Program Guidance Document is prepared and approved by the Board.

Purpose of this document

The organisation follows a comprehensive strategy for implementation of its various programmatic interventions, specific to each thematic area. This document briefly provides the policy direction and expected outcome for use by the Program Staff of SACH. These include:

- Assessing the thematic area/vertical and understanding it's nuances in terms of various interventions that can be undertaken.
- Develop effective strategies based on previous implementation experience and learnings and/or building new strengths required for efficiently and effectively implementing programs / projects
- Promote pro-active leadership & competencies among the staff to handle challenges and opportunities as well as maximise outcome
- Use emerging technologies to drive growth and transformation and show excellence

Introduction

A not-for-profit organisation, SACH has been in operation for the past 30 plus years working towards development of the poor and disadvantaged communities. The initial focus was on policy advocacy to improve the access of the urban poor to public health services in

India. A force envisioned to advocate public health through health education and preventive medicine, SACH has now steered towards addressing the needs of the community - covering several domains, viz., health, education, livelihoods, safe sanitation, water, food, nutrition, environment, climate change, natural resource management, and emergency response, preparedness and mitigation. We aim to develop and execute the most effective solutions to community challenges in both urban and rural regions around the country.

Vision

“Creating self-reliant communities that contributes towards better quality of life”. The vision is realized through successful efforts in making things work for the poor, differently abled and communities affected by disasters and social unrest. The vision lends strengths to advocate for a resilience approach wherein the stake holding communities are motivated and capacitated to drive the change rather than becoming a “passive recipient of assistance.” An empowering and collectivization strategy is therefore central to the program implementation in SACH. SACH also aims to realize its vision through partnership, collaboration and networking.

Mission

Implement sustainable initiatives by reaching out to the socially and economically disadvantaged and excluded communities without any bias on account of religion, caste, colour or creed.

Approach

SACH's approach on development has always been focused on transformation in a sustainable way. Our goal has been to ensure a decent quality of life by extending a means of self-empowerment to the remotest of regions across the nation. We do this by bringing in change in three different aspects - Economic, Social, and Environmental.

Objectives

1. To channelize and improve knowledge, skills, and expertise in engaging with rural community to accelerate development of the community in equitable and sustainable ways.
2. To act as an intermediary for the communities as sources of new information, knowledge, skills, innovations, expertise, and resource for their development that places “PEOPLE” as central to all development efforts.
3. Extend support to communities affected by disasters or social unrests in providing timely response and mitigating its long-term impact.

Priority Areas

Based on years of experience, understanding the dynamics of development, the organization has considered following priority areas for interventions, and established solutions that transcend beyond short-term support and philanthropy. These thematic areas contain most important social issues, and the solutions are aimed at addressing the root causes.

Thematic Areas & Previous Experience:

Education:

In India, realizing high quality education of students in government schools has been a crucial challenge, with minor variances, in the situation in different states. SACH believes that students can only acquire quality education if the school has basic infrastructure that takes care of basic facilities. SACH has done extensive work in education across India covering states like J&K, Kerala, Punjab, Meghalaya, etc. The intent behind this is to provide local communities and their children with availability of better educational facilities, and make them aware about the importance of education, and nurturing young minds at the right time. This is done through structural refurbishment and strengthening, equipping schools with smarter technology, better classroom facilities, empowering students, capacity building of teachers among other things using a team approach.

The following points briefly highlight the interventions undertaken by SACH in the field of providing quality education:

- Refurbishment of school infrastructure to ensure safer and child-friendly classrooms and school surroundings. About 77 schools covering over 10,000 school children have been directly supported for structural refurbishment and improvement across the states of Kerala, Meghalaya, Punjab and Jammu Kashmir.
- Installation of Smart Classes introducing easy-to-use technological equipment to enhance teaching and improve learning effectiveness. The use of technology promotes interactive learning and thus confidence building.
- Improving school facilities by providing better furniture, teaching aids, library, science lab, safe drinking water system, cleaner and proper sanitation facilities
- Improving extra-curriculars by upgrading libraries with digital devices with access to global level learning interface, along with equipping it with more books to inculcate the habit of reading. Sports kits have been provided to strengthen the sports club to support physical activity and nurture interest in sports.
- Establishing supplemental learning alternatives through digital learning centres offering computer learning opportunities and access to online certificate courses to the youth and adults.
- Capacity building of teachers by introducing them to newer teaching alternatives and methods which would aid in improved learning outcomes.
- Life skills and mental health support sessions for school children and teachers. These sessions have been designed to increase awareness on mental health issues and how to minimise its harm, along with personality development sessions including life skills to improve the confidence of students.
- Transforming Anganwadi Centres to ensure a safer and a more engaging environment to small children, infants, and mothers, including child friendly and safe spaces. Focus has been on ensuring an extremely child friendly play-area, with shock-proof matting and safe play materials. Nutrition integration has also been introduced in these centres by establishing small kitchen gardens for additional nutritional supplement to the mid-day meals offered at these centres. About 30 Anganwadi Centres have been supported so far for upgradation, re-strengthening and promotion of pre-school learning.

Livelihood Enhancement and Skill Development:

SACH has focused on improving the economic status of rural households and ensuring food security through skill development and livelihood enhancement opportunities. This thematic area was to help youth and women who have a limited land base as well as those who have cultivable land and improve livelihood options and opportunities. SACH uses a variety of skill-building initiatives, introducing new skills and technology in the agro-horticulture and livestock sectors, to help target households achieve overall socio-economic development. SACH believes in extending professional support towards promoting a number of options, alternative livelihood opportunities for a rural family so that their existing livelihood basket is widened.

The following interventions have been undertaken under this thematic area:

- Introduction of mixed crop cultivation including vegetables, spices, fruits and ornamental flower cultivation to introduce the practice of round-the-year cultivation in place of the current practice of utilising farmlands during a specific season.
- Organic manure in the form of Vermicompost and Azolla units, bio-slurry and the use of Trichoderma was introduced to the farmers to reduce the dependence on chemical fertilisers for crop yield and protection.
- Tool banks were setup and equipped with terrain-based farming tools to provide technological aid to the farmers and reduce drudgery on the farmlands. A variety of 10-15 tools including power tillers and Happy Seeders/Rotavators have been provided.
- Improving animal husbandry practices by training the community members on upgraded techniques for animal rearing, supporting them with better specimens of animals and connecting them with veterinary department for animal care and medicine. Piggery, poultry, goater and fish rearing has been supported extensively.
- Women entrepreneurial units such as tailoring units, weaving centres, food processing units, broom processing centres, embroidery units have been established to provide a platform for women with the local skill set to practice the craft at an entrepreneurial level.
- Rural sales outlet was setup in order to provide a forward linkage platform connecting all the production units and farm outputs to market.

Health and Sanitation:

Promoting health through preventive and curative services has always been a strength of SACH since inception. SACH had begun its work in improving the capacity of government health facilities in Delhi-NCR to respond to the needs of urban informal settlers and later on to de-congest major hospitals by strengthening primary and secondary care. Later on the focus got widened to the self-management of Non-communicable diseases like Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, stroke, cancer, and several issues and health concerns of the aged. SACH had worked with over a dozen leading hospitals in India like the Apollo, Max, Sitaram Bhartia, St. Johns Hospital, etc. SACH had rolled out its Community based healthcare work in Punjab for empowering people to self-manage NCDs. As emerging health care area, Geriatric and Neuro disorders and disability. SACH had pilot tested such models in Pitampura, Delhi, Gurgaon and in the process of starting an integral model of care and support for persons with NDDs in Kerala.

India, with its ever-increasing aging population face new challenges in the health sector due to a paradigm shift in disease burden. Added to the burden of communicable diseases, there is epidemiological transition with increasing incidence of non-communicable disorders (NCD), some attributable to lifestyle and others to increased life expectancy. Ageing and neurological disorders are interlinked. Many of the elderly developmental health challenges that require specialised attention, care and management. In India, specialised Geriatric Care Centres are not available and often elderly persons are left to home confinement which leads to more aggravated mental health issues. Quite often they suffer from significant dementia, Parkinson's disease, motor neuron disorder, traumatic injuries, brain neuromuscular disorders, etc. Stroke among the elderly is the second leading cause of mortality worldwide and is associated with a wide variety of sensorimotor, cognitive perceptual, and behavioral impairments. These post stroke impairments might limit the ability of stroke survivors to independently perform their activities of daily living. Consequently, they might also restrict effective participation in family and social roles. A significant proportion of stroke survivors therefore become disabled, with profound effects on their quality of life.

SACH has highly experienced and qualified talent pool that can address the needs of the children and adult persons with Neuro Disorders and Disability. The services being provided include:

- Autism, CP and Down Syndrome rehabilitation services
- Stroke Rehabilitation Services focusing on:
 - Strengthen motor skills.
 - Mobility Training
 - Constraint-induced therapy
 - Range-of-motion therapy
 - Technology-Assisted Physical Activities
 - Functional electrical stimulation
 - Robotic technology
 - Wireless technology
 - Virtual reality
 - Cognitive and Emotional Activities (Therapy for communication disorders)
 - Psychological evaluation and treatment
 - Medications (Ayurveda and Unani)
 - Alternate Medicine Therapies
 - Ayurveda, Unani and herbal therapy
 - Ayurveda -Pancha Karma therapy

Our WASH programmes seek to address some of the critical gaps in water infrastructure, basic sanitation facilities and hygiene, and provided easy-maintenance and sustainable solutions and units to the rural communities. SACH has supported communities to establish community managed water supply systems, introduced inclusive and safe WASH facilities in schools, Community led total sanitation sessions mobilising the communities to work towards eliminating open defecation and induce behaviour change through school committees, WASH volunteers and community hygiene promoters.

Activities undertaken by the organisation:

- Mobile Medical Health Units were placed at Banka, Bihar and Prakasam, Andhra Pradesh overcoming geographical barriers to provide remote villages with basic medical facilities.
- Weekly Clinics were established to provide basic healthcare and diagnostic services in the remotest parts of India.
- Construction and renovation of toilets in schools and households to promote hygiene and safe sanitation. Over 225 school sanitation units and over 4000 household sanitation units have been setup across the states of Meghalaya, Punjab and Odisha.
- WASH trainings have been conducted covering about 48 villages and over 40,000 households. Awareness drives conducted included aspects such as improved sanitation practices, and behaviour change on quality of life and health.
- Potable water supply structures have been established connecting over 5100 households with continuous water supply
- Bathing enclosures have been constructed to promote secure sanitation and provide privacy and safety to women. The structure also ensures proper disposal of waste water.
- Construction of sewage treatment system in village pond which treats the wastewater and releases the clean water back to the pond, which is then fit for use.
- Self-sustainable village waste segregation system has been established to increase the awareness and importance of waste segregation and proper disposal of waste.

Nutrition and Well-Being:

India abodes a huge number of malnourished population. Various estimates give varied figure, however, it has been generally accepted that close to 74% adult women and girl children in India are malnourished. Therefore, working on this important theme was essential. Any initiative in improving nutrition is seen as an important and credible steps towards building a healthy nation. SACH supports the nutrition services in Anganwadi Centres and PHCs with a focus on maternal and child nutrition. Our work has been to improve the availability of health and nutrition information, capacity building of health staff, community members, and volunteers. Some of the activities under this priority area are distribution of packaged meal, establishment of kitchen gardens, provision of safe drinking water, etc.

Activities undertaken by SACH:

- Distribution of packaged meal consisting of nutritious uncooked meal packets with dal, rice, dehydrated vegetables and flavouring mix in semi urbans regions of Bangalore and flood-afflicted parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- Promotion of kitchen gardens in households, schools and aganwadi centres to provide supplementary nutrition in over 42 villages across Punjab and Meghalaya.
- Safe drinking water structures have been established in the public spaces across 25 villages and over 25 schools in Meghalaya.

Financial Literacy and Inclusion:

Understanding the gaps in the knowledge base and technical know-hows of money management, financial literacy is a focal point for most rural development projects

undertaken by SACH. Under this area, community has gained financial literacy and has also been made aware about various financial aids provided by the government for the rural population.

Gender Inclusion and Empowerment:

SACH has adopted a gender appreciative approach which ensures practices and systems that ensure gender inclusion. A priority area has been the positive discrimination for Women empowerment with focus on confidence building of women for leadership and decision-making roles, entrepreneurship and business development, etc. The capacity building sessions and trainings have been so designed that an unbiased inclusion of genders have been ensured. Most importantly, a 'DO NO HARM' approach has been undertaken which understands the existence of gender issues and the social evils prevailing around it in the communities, and work towards prevention of aggravating the situation as a first step towards conflict resolution.

An activity which came under this thematic area was establishing women entrepreneurial units such as tailoring units, broom processing centres, embroidery units have been established to provide a platform for women with local skillset to practice the craft at an entrepreneurial unit.

Environment and Natural Resource Management and Climate Change:

Natural resource management has become a very important call in today's times as natural resources are depleting massively. Natural resources like fossil fuels, flora and fauna, etc. are very important and have to be spent sustainably in order to save it for future generations as well. Keeping this in mind SACH has taken up a number of initiatives like Clean Development Mechanism, installation of biogas and solar lights, installation of vertical gardens and establishment of water conservation structures, etc.

Interventions undertaken under this thematic area:

- Clean Development Mechanism promotion by introducing Happy Seeder machines to farmers in order to control crop residue burning and reduce the causes of air pollution, and promote the principle of Zero-Tillage, allowing the crop residue to decompose in the farm itself.
- Renewable energy resources like biogas for cooking and solar energy for lighting and energy alternatives have been provided to villages across Meghalaya, Kerala and Punjab. Installation of vertical gardens in urban cities of Bengaluru and Delhi have been done as part of environment sustainability and promoting green belts in urban regions.
- Establishing water conservation structures such as Check dams, diversion channels, retention wall, minor irrigation systems, etc., in order to increase the availability of water for irrigation and daily use, round-the-year, and also to create awareness on the importance of conserving water and soil.
- Installation of solar lights in remote regions of Meghalaya, Punjab and Kerala to solve issues of poor lighting and promoting low maintenance alternatives.

Pre-requisites for programmatic interventions

A thematic area-wise detail for selection criteria has been given below, which is the basic pre-requisite to undertake the activity/beneficiary.

Education

- Only Govt. Schools to be undertaken, except for special circumstances/case point which requires supporting other schools.
- Pre-activity assessment report including baseline data of the schools to be recorded.
- Sanction letter from the District Education Officer and School In-charge to be sought prior to initiation of intervention.
- Handing over letters for any assets provided to the school
- Acknowledgement letter covering the scope of work/support provided to the school post completion of the activity
- Completion report and photographs

Livelihood Enhancement & Skill Development

- Induction meeting to be conducted with the village organization explaining the purview of the project/activity (meeting minutes with participant list required)
- Community organization to present an initial list of nominated beneficiaries for each activity.
- Pre-activity assessment of the selected beneficiaries, including copy of the KYC Documents to be recorded.
- Handing over letter specifying the project-extended support to be provided to the beneficiary, attested by the community organization.
- Follow-up for monitoring and impact assessment along with report and photographs

Health and Sanitation

- Falls in the domain of NCDs, CDs, NDDS
- Working with existing hospital, care home, special school or institutions
- Signed agreement with the Governing Body of the participating institutions
- Willingness to adapt to new technology and standards
- Baseline and separate project team
- Agreement on values, vision and non-negotiables
- Have reasonable time validity for the partnership, at least five years and above

Nutrition and Wellbeing

- Working with only government institutions and community
- Convergence with First level of contact institutions of the government
- Involvement of government functionaries at District, Block and Panchayat level
- Working with already existing community organizations, Groups and Federations
- Agreement of partnership is non-negotiable

Financial Literacy and Inclusion

- Aims at women empowerment and resilience building
- Work with Women SHGs and Federations
- Complete baseline

- Working with local cadres like Bank Sakhi, etc., for building linkages with banks and other financial institutions
- Educate on use of digital financial transactions and do's and Don'ts

Gender Inclusion and Empowerment

- Work with Women SHGs and Federations
- Complete baseline
- Working with local cadres like Bank Sakhi, etc., for building linkages with banks and other financial institutions
- Women to be in leadership positions of all community led work, community institutions and revolving fund programme

Environment and Natural Resource Management, Water and Sanitation and Climate Change

- Baseline/Needs assessment of the region for the specific scope of work
- Consult and technical guidance from the respective district departmental authorities, along with sanction letter.
- Handing over letter to the community organization post-completion of the work.
- Community requisition letter for the recommended region/location/site
- Pre-assessment by a certified civil expert with BoQ as per SoR specific for the state.
- Handing over letter to the community organization/institution
- Completion report and photographs



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