

CONTEXT

India has experienced high economic growth rates over recent years, which bring prosperity and advantages but also create new challenges. The country is confronted with widening economic disparities between the well-to-do and the poor and also between the rural and urban areas. Disparities occur in the access to and the control of natural resources which are reflected in, for example, frequent contestations about these resources between communities and corporates.

The State has recognized these disparities and has identified them as potentially threatening to a healthy economy and social stability. Legislations, policies and programmes formulated by the State are progressive, well-intended and consistent in their appreciation of the concerns for the poor, who still make up the majority of the Indian population. But weak implementation, systemic constraints and lack of information have rendered these legislations unsuccessful in safeguarding the rights of the economically disadvantaged and the socially marginalized such as landless people, women, dalits and tribal communities.

Today, communities and community based organizations are not yet well equipped to demand accountability of the State, monitor implementation of policies and legislations and effectively voice their concerns on issues that impact the governance of resources. In recent years, however, Non-Governmental Organizations through pilot projects, have successfully demonstrated that it is possible to undertake inclusive, community led planning and implementation in order for development to benefit the poor. However, these pilots have been small scale, resource intensive and have not looked at follow up and methods to document upscale and replicate these efforts.

Good governance is beneficial to the continuous growth and well-being of all people in India. The Government of India (GoI) has placed good governance and inclusive growth at the center of the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The enactments of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Right to Information Act aim at forwarding inclusive growth and better governance.

Not only empowerment of the local governance bodies so they can implement policies and legislation has to be on the agenda, but also the inclusion of good governance in all development programmes. SDC sees promoting good governance in developmental programmes as one of the ways to ensure that policies, legislation and projects, actually reach the poor and disadvantaged. Good governance is also considered as an effective means to ensure the sustainability of the SDC supported Programmes.



"In India there are around **2.8 million** elected representatives out of which **1.03 million** are women."¹

"India ranks number **96 of 102 countries** on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index"²

"**36.90 percent** (1'003'324) of total elected representatives in rural local governments (2'718'657) are women."³

FACTS AND FIGURES



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Promoting Good Governance in Development Programmes



OBJECTIVE

SDC strives to promote good governance in all its programmes. The objective is to strengthen accountability, inclusive participation and gender equality in all programmes in India.

RESPONSE

Good governance is a set of principles relating to promotion of accountability, transparency, gender equality and participation to be mainstreamed in all SDC programmes in India. The rationale to strengthen principles of good governance in all programmes in India is anchored as much in the Indian context as in SDC's mandate to promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. The mandate makes it important for all programmes to address equality and improve participation of the poor and the marginalized.

To establish a sound basis for sustainable and equitable economic growth in India, SDC strongly argues that several measures have to be put in place to drastically improve the impact of development policies. Linkages between policy development and implementation have to be formed, while promoting decentralization, strengthening inclusive participatory processes, ensuring gender equality, and respecting the rule of law.

SDC implements governance as a cross-cutting theme in all its projects and bases its approach on three principles. One is accountability of all stakeholders, so that programmes will benefit the disadvantaged communities. The second is inclusive participation which aims at helping concerned groups to articulate their needs and concerns as well as support them, and represent their interests and rights at the national and international level. They are encouraged to participate in important forums and multiple stakeholder consultations. And the third principle is gender equality – ensuring that concerns of women and men are taken into consideration, and they are encouraged to participate in both, development and decision making processes.

ACHIEVED AND EXPECTED RESULTS

- In mainstreaming governance in all programmes SDC aims at ensuring participation and representation of the interest of vulnerable groups, including dalits (marginalized caste), landless people and women, and empowering them to voice their concerns and issues.
- Good governance would create space for different groups who may not benefit directly to be represented in development programmes.
- With good governance the effectiveness of all SDC supported projects would be strengthened and this will help to better address issues of poverty.
- The programme would work towards greater sustainability in development projects.
- Lessons learnt and field experiences would be shared at national and international debates and conferences, in order to influence policies and strategies with adequate information from the grassroot level.



Photo © Lisa Magnollay

IMPACT

Success story: Reversing fate

Fulpara is a hamlet where 33 families live. It is located in the Kachchh district in Gujarat – an ecologically fragile region in which SDC has been supporting land and water management activities through partner organization since the early '90s. The village lies in saline desert plains and faces a constant problem of sea water ingress in the groundwater. This leads to severe drinking and irrigation water shortages.

With the support of SDC, the partner organization Sahjeevan initiated a land and water programme with the village community to reduce the risk of crop failure if rainfall is scarce or if there are droughts. This programme was conceptualized to revive the techniques of traditional water sources to enhance the food, fodder and drinking water security even in the drought years.

The women of the village took on the lead and represented the issues in planning meetings. The community planned and implemented most of the activities regarding improvement of their domestic water, food and fodder security during times of drought. A Village Committee was set up and with the active involvement of women, an irrigation dam was constructed, which has a capacity of almost 40 million cubic metres of water and can be used to irrigate as much as 280 hectares of land. This action has turned out to be an effective measure to avoid desertification and at the same time to improve food security. "There has been an increase in cultivation by five percent this year. And I am happy that everybody in my village has benefited through this," says Velabhai Rajput, a farmer.

Thanks to the women of Fulpara the fate of the village has been reversed. Their role in this action is now being acknowledged. Ratanbhai Rajput, a community member, says: "When the women of our village decided to take the responsibility of these activities, we were not convinced that they would be able to handle it. But they proved themselves. After one rain, for the first time in our village, we have fodder for our cattle and bajro (local millet) for our children. We have now realized that for a better future of the village, women should participate in such programmes".

Case Study: Road to change

Vimla lives in Tharia in Uttar Pradesh, which is an area where people get their livelihood mainly from brick making. In 2001, SDC started a project in collaboration with The Energy and Resource Institute (TERI) that aims at improving energy efficiency in the brick making sector. At the same time the project looks at governance issues and takes into account the needs of the brick workers. Their technical, social and entrepreneurial capacities have been improved so that they can become active partners in the transformation and growth of the brick industry and also their lives.

Vimla is one of the women who have been able to change their own as well as the fate of others because they were supported to take matters into their own hands. "For a long time our village was cut off from other villages by a patch of marshy land. For many years we villagers had voiced the need for a road across the marsh - but to no avail. And then we came to know that the government had actually sanctioned money for a road, but that this money was lying at the Block Development Officer's (BDO) office. So we went to meet him and asked him to build the road. He assured us of early action – but nothing happened thereafter. One night, all of us women went to the marsh. With our bare hands we dug up mud and soil and arranged broken stones. By morning we had made a kutcha (non-tarred) road across the marsh. The BDO was furious, and sent a small group of men to demolish the road. We built it again the next night, and again it was destroyed. Thrice we rebuilt that road until finally the BDO threatened us with dire consequences if we did not stop our attempts. That evening we discussed the matter at a BPVS (*Bhatta Parivar Vikas Sangathan* – an institution promoted for brick making workers) meeting. The next day we went to the town of Lalganj on three tractor-trolleys, carrying BPVS banners, and shouting slogans. We parked ourselves on the road right outside the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's (SDM) office. It created quite a sensation in the town, even attracting the local media. The SDM hurried out of his office, heard us out, and gave us his personal assurance that a proper road would be built across the marsh. It was - in three days!"



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