

**Report of the Reflective Practice Exercise  
Conducted with  
The Sustainable Tribal Empowerment  
Project**

**February 23-25, 2005  
Vishakapatnam, India**

*By MOLD Unit*

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The MOLD Team

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AOL	Action-Oriented Learning
CAG	Community Action Group
CBMS	Community Based Monitoring System
CBO	Community Based Organization
ITDA	Integrated Tribal Development Agency
MFP	Minor Forest Produce
MMT	Mission Management Team
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PFA	Program Focus Area
PMT	Project Management Team
PNGO	Partner NGO
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PSMI	Project Standards Measurement Instrument
RBA	Rights-based Approach
SEC	School Education Committee
SHG	Self-Help Group
SMT	Senior Management Team
STEP	Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project
VSS	Van Suraksha Samiti

## INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project (STEP) operates in four districts of the southeast Indian State of Andhra Pradesh. A three-day reflective practice exercise was conducted with the project staff at Vishakapatnam from February 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> to gather some of the key lessons and recommendations while at the same time encouraging a culture of learning among staff. This report documents some of the key learnings vis-a- vis program focus areas and other project objectives.

## BACKGROUND

The tribal communities of Andhra Pradesh are among the poorest and most deprived in India. Most tribals live in the north-eastern coastal districts of the State, characterised by female literacy level of less than 10%, Infant Mortality Rate of 212 per 1000 live births and female school drop out rate of 70%. The average annual household income in the project area is INR 10,000/-. Dwindling minor forest produce (MFP), exploitation of tribals by unscrupulous non-tribal traders as well as land alienation despite protective legislation, all add to the tribals' present state of socio-economic marginalization.

In this context, STEP was initiated as a process-oriented multi-sectoral project aimed at significant and sustainable improvement in the livelihood of poor people living in marginalised tribal communities in the agency areas of the State's four districts. The project is supported by the European Union and implemented through 29 local NGOs and many more community-based organizations (CBOs) in collaboration with Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA). The project's primary stakeholders are 235,000 households in 6,200 villages/ habitations across 42 *mandals* of the four districts. The project's secondary stakeholders include CBOs (primarily self-help groups, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Vana Suraksha Samitis, School Education Committees and Community Action

Groups), local NGOs, government institutions (principally ITDA) at various levels (Village, Mandal, district, and State), formal financial providers, and national and international development agencies.

The key result areas of the project are the following:

- **Community self-management.** Strengthening CBOs to manage developmental activities by working in collaboration with PRIs
- **Improved service-delivery.** Improving quality of services provided by NGOs and ITDA in the areas of health, education, household income and food security.
- **Micro-projects.** Implementing small projects to address health, food security, road access, water and sanitation and educational infrastructure needs of the tribal community.
- **Micro Finance:** Strengthening SHGs and linking them to formal financial institutions
- **Stakeholder coordination.** Strengthening linkages between PRIs, NGOs and ITDAs for sustained, coordinated and effective implementation of developmental activities and for advocating issues of tribal livelihood rights.

These result areas enable the project to focus its efforts and resources to facilitating local development agenda.

## OBJECTIVES, EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND METHODOLOGY

CARE India has sought to institutionalise the Reflective Practice to strengthen the Mission's learning mechanisms, to encourage self-reflection and group reflection, and to think out of the box. The project's goals and strategies are unique within CARE India in many respects, and have implications for learning

and programming not only for other projects within the organisation, but across the development spectrum. Hence the attempt to reflect on clarity of goals and objectives articulated in the project logframe with its achievements and potential impact, and linking these with lessons for future programming.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this Reflective Practice exercise were the following:

- Reflect and review STEP's program achievements vis-à-vis objectives and CARE International Programming Principles
- Reflect on the program achievements in the light of program focus areas
- Capture key lessons learned from implementation of programme; and
- Encourage self-learning and group learning among staff

## **EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

The outputs expected were the following:

- Team sharing on best practices and gaps in implementation with recommendations for greater project effectiveness and impact
- Improved clarity of team members on program focus areas and future action; and
- Draw lessons for the project and the organisation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The three-day reflective practice exercise (Annexure 1) was designed to capture the experiences of the project, and encourage the staff to reflect on key learnings for future programming. It entailed the following:

1. Review project documents by MOLD
2. Staff response to PSMI elements
3. Analysis of staff response by MOLD
4. The two-day workshop designed to elicit perspectives from staff in a participatory way.

Participants included district team members who were directly involved in executing the project, and staff from the project coordination office who were involved in extending technical and program support functions as well as decision making units providing program direction. The workshop was facilitated by the Monitoring Organizational Learning and Development (MOLD) Unit of CARE India.

## FINDINGS

The Reflective Practice was a two-part exercise. In the first part, staff rated the project along an adapted version of Care International's Project Standards Measurement Instrument (PSMI) prior to the workshop. The findings were presented to the participants at the start of the exercise and, in a way, provided the points for group work and plenary discussions.

This report is structured as follows:

- A. Overall performance of STEP to date
- B. Achievements and constraints vis-à-vis the project's key result areas
- C. Partnerships with both Government and NGOs
- D. Looking at the project through the lens of program focus areas
- E. Learning, Monitoring and documentation
- F. Human resource deployment

Based on these discussions, an action plan was evolved by participants.

### **A. OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF STEP**

Prior to the workshop, a project standards measurement instrument was circulated by e-mail to 42 project staff by MOLD. It comprised a set of closed-ended questions. These were constructed around fourteen themes. Each theme had a set of 2-5 questions that constituted an index for analysis. Each question was to be *rated* on a 5-point scale where the lowest score meant that the standard was not or barely met and the highest score meant that this standard

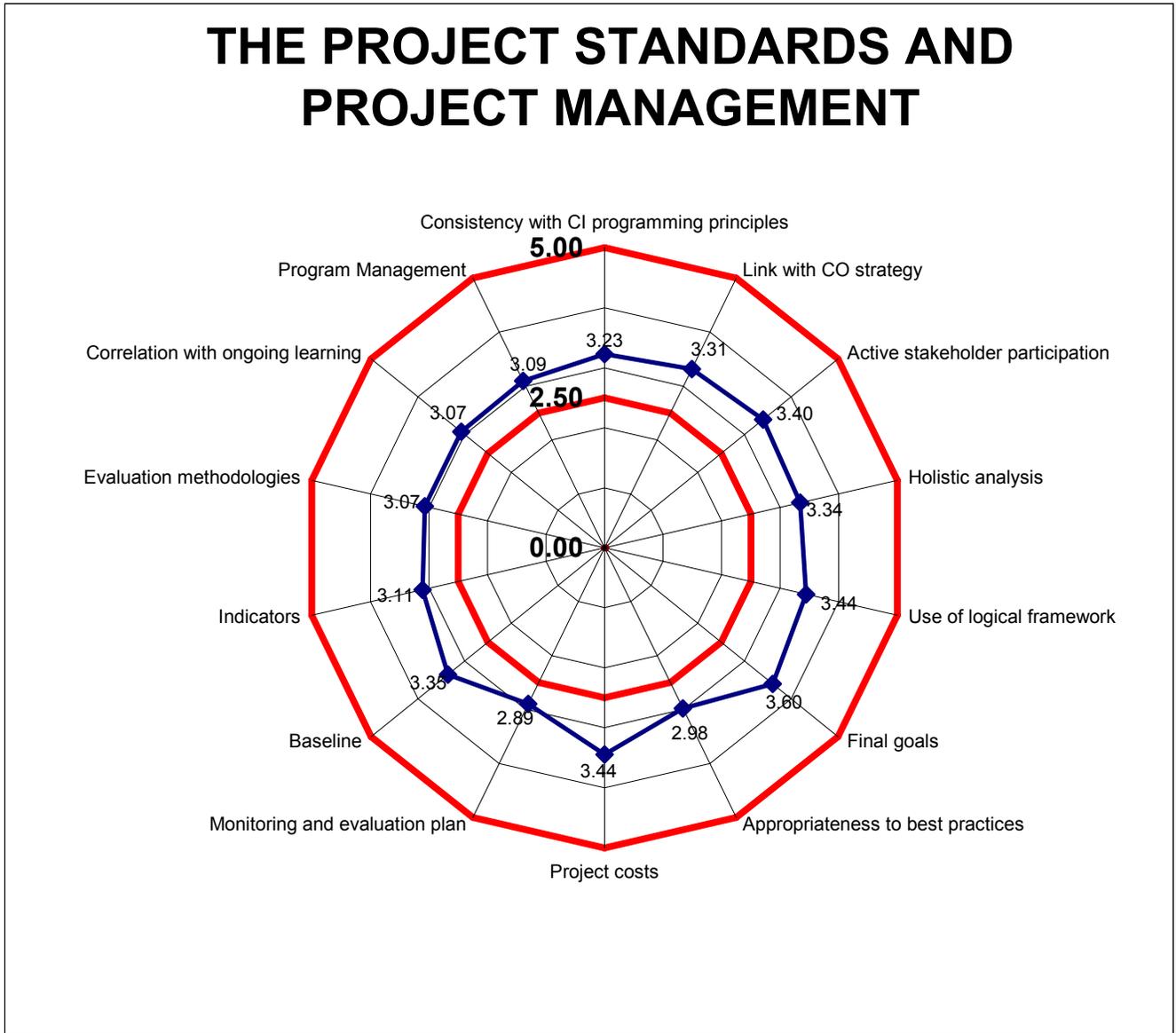
was exemplified in the project. With one exception, all themes and their associated questions were adapted from the CARE International Project Standards. One additional theme related to overall project management was formulated specifically for the purpose of this exercise. The response rate was 90.47%. Means for each dimension/theme was calculated after having developed an index score for each theme. The means for all the fourteen themes were then charted on radar (Figure 1).

The results show that all staff feel that the project meets each of the standards more or less reasonably well. The scores in most responses were between '3' and '4'. The project's average score was '3.24', indicating that the project met the project standards reasonably, but not very, well.

Some of the key inferences that may be drawn from the radar are as follows:

- The project demonstrates consistency with CI programming principles, and articulates a link between its final goals and CO strategy.
- The project has ensured active stakeholder participation, holistic analysis and use of logical framework. In terms of costs, staff reported relative efficiency.
- The project's monitoring and evaluation plans need to be strengthened. The undue delay in preparation and installation of a software package has adversely affected the project's ability to use the system appropriately.
- The project should better conform to social, environmental and technical best practices. While it does not reveal any significant shortfalls, it has yet to exemplify some good practices. However, the AOL stands out as a major contribution of the project for effective programming.

Figure 1: PROJECT STANDARDS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT RADAR



- SCALE (5-point)**
1. Standard represented by axis is barely met
  2. Standard is minimally met
  3. Standard is reasonably met
  4. Standard is met quite well
  5. Standard is exemplified by the project

It needs to be clarified that the radar only shows averages, and thus conceals significant and individual extreme responses. A disaggregated presentation of responses is annexed (*Annexure 2*).

## **B. OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS VIS-À-VIS KEY RESULT AREAS**

Following the presentation of the PSMI data, participants were divided into small groups to identify the project's achievements and constraints in the light of the overall logical framework of the project. The group work findings presented to the plenary are summarized below (*Annex 3*).

### **B.1. Achievements**

- Community mobilisation.
- Demand generation and service-provision.
- Capacity building of service providers.
- Income- and employment-generation through self-help groups.

Some key achievements identified by participants are as follows.

- Institutionalising mechanism for reflection at the community level through Action-Oriented Learning (AOL). The commitment to promoting community self-management enables this achievement.
- Linking communities' prioritized needs with resources of government agencies. The project's support to community micro-plans enables utilization of resources for needs identified by communities.
- Building skills and management capacities of PNGOs, CBOs and ITDA frontline workers. The commitment to improved delivery of services
- Promoting community self-management enables this achievement.
- Enabling communities to access relevant information.
- Facilitating demand generation for services at community level.

- The AOL process has helped communities to be more explicit about their problems and strategies to solve these. For instance, micro-plans encourage them to not only identify absence of teachers as a problem, but, more importantly, would also encourage them to strengthen the School Education Committees (SEC) that can effectively negotiate with providers, and ensure quality.
- Facilitating stakeholder convergence. The nature and process followed in developing the micro-plans necessitates stakeholder convergence at all levels. This has brought the community, NGOs, service-providers and Government officials, particularly the ITDA together.

## **B.2. Limitations and constraints**

The participants identified the following areas for improvement:

- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Documentation and contribution to organizational learning.
- Advocacy.

Some key **activities** that could have been better executed are:

- Effective management of stakeholders, viz. Government counterparts and donors;
- Putting in place a community based monitoring and evaluation system, whose feedback could be shared with the community;
- Building institutional linkages, especially with PRIs and ITDA;
- Creating visibility and recognition for the project; and
- Documentation of good practices, such as AOL.

The participants identified the following as **constraints** to effective implementation.

- Absence of an explicitly articulated organisational stand vis-à-vis issue of community empowerment with the donors and the ITDA.
- General aversion to risk-taking and preference to complying with donor demands.
- Tendency to view systems and procedures as ends in themselves, rather than as means of facilitating quality programming.

### **C. KEY PROJECT RELATED ISSUES: PARTNERSHIPS**

Following the general discussion on the overall performance of the project, the group discussed key project dimensions in detail. Due to time constraints the group discussions were limited to the following key issues:

1. Partnership with ITDA
2. Partnering with NGOs
3. Gender
4. Rights and advocacy
5. Monitoring
6. Documentation
7. Human resource management

Key issues raised during the group discussion under each of these themes are presented below. Lessons from these issues are extracted and presented alongside.

#### **C.1. Collaboration with Government:**

The ITDA is the project's most important partner. This collaboration reflects the State Government's recognition of the project's relevance. It provides an opportunity for CARE to influence the programme management systems of the Government. A number of key issues remain, however.

##### **C.1.1. Issues and lessons:**

- **Unequal relationship with Government:**

- An unequal relationship persists between the State Government and CARE. The Government perceives CARE and the partner NGOs as merely extensions of its own service-delivery arm. This is largely because the project's district-level staff are located within the premises of their Government counterparts.
- Pressure from the ITDA has resulted in the dilution of the project's community empowerment focus. The project's support to petitions filed by community action groups (CAGs) has been considerably weakened due to this pressure.
- The ITDA compels the project to dovetail activities with its own, to participate in campaigns even when there is fundamental disagreement, and to act as its service-delivery arm. Further, the donor too supports this model of 'synergy' since it prioritizes the Government over CARE.

**Lesson:**

The absence of a strategy for engaging with the state Government and the donor has resulted in the project's inability to inform and influence these stakeholders.

**C.1.2. Recommendations**

- Participants felt that they were leading a dual personality. To the communities and the PNGOs, they were advocating a rights approach. However, vis-a-vis the State Government and the donor, they were unable to take a firm stand. Some of the recommendations that emerged from the group are as follows:
- An across-the-table discussion between project staff and ITDA Project Officers is needed to smoothen out the issues.
- CARE needs to take a clear stand vis-à-vis the State Government at different levels. Government officials at all levels need to be better informed about the project's and CARE's values, strategies and development ideology.

- A buy-in of the project activities and strategies by the donor right at the outset. Donor support at meetings with the ITDA is very critical in this context.
- Some functional (tactical) compromise may be needed, to push forward strategic developmental approaches.
- These issues need to be flagged off at forums such as the MTR and at SMT/MMT meetings.

## **C.2. Partnership with NGOs**

The project has established effective working partnerships with 29 NGOs in the four operational districts of the project. These NGOs enjoy excellent rapport with the community, which they did even prior to partnering with CARE. Thus far the partnership has helped build NGO capacities on Action-Oriented-Learning (AOL), community mobilisation, Monitoring and evaluation, and other subject related topics such as health, micro finance, micro projects, empowerment processes, etc. This relationship over the last two years has blossomed into effective project implementation. Key issues that came up for discussion in this regard are highlighted below.

### **C.2.1. *Issues and lessons***

- **Contractor-Contractee relationship:**
  - Although the relationship can be defined as very positive, cordial, and mutually beneficial, it still is largely dominated by the dominant contractor-contractee features of the MoU. This in a sense vitiates the relationship to some extent.
  - Further, the overload of essentially reporting demands from CARE hinders the quality of PNGO work.
  - Their capacity building is in general restricted to enabling them to do their job better, rather than providing them with planning tools and frameworks.

- The general feeling among the NGOs is that CARE plans and NGOs perform. They are merely seen as implementers. Hence approaches adopted lack a sense of ownership among the NGOs.
- Staff reported that there is a lack of trust between CARE and NGOs.

**Lesson:**

The persistence of a contractor-contractee relationship hinders the development of ownership of the project among NGOs and their developing creative solutions specific to their local context.

- **Development Approach Dilemma:**

This is a spill over from the problem faced with the ITDA mentioned above. CARE's inconsistency in adhering to its vision of empowerment, especially when faced with ITDA pressure puts the organization in an embarrassing position vis-à-vis its NGO partners. The project is confronted with the dilemma of convincing the NGOs about its commitment to empowerment.

**Lesson:**

The fact that the project is unable to consistently communicate and influence the Government weakens its position vis-à-vis PNGOs. It also raises doubts among NGOs about the project's alignment with their vision.

**Succumbing to pressure exerted by one stakeholder weakens the project team's stand vis-à-vis other stakeholders.**

**C.2.2. Recommendations**

- There should be periodic planning and review meetings with PNGOs along with a well-planned agenda. These reviews should be held at all operational levels, such as district, cluster and community .
- Continuous capacity needs assessment of NGO partners is required.

- Action points need to be jointly developed, to which both are held mutually accountable.
- Existing systems such as partnership relationship survey need to be institutionalised and appropriately used for greater project impact..
- Trust and team building exercises involving both project and PNGO staff need to be established in order to manage the relationship better. .

#### **D. KEY PROJECT-RELATED ISSUES: PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS**

The next major theme pertained to CARE India's Programme Focus Areas (PFA). In its attempt to promote lasting positive change in the lives of the people, CARE India focuses on addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice. Three crosscutting themes define *how* this focus is sharpened:

- Addressing unequal power relations, particularly **gender** relations
- Strengthening representation and participation in local **governance** and community institutions
- Building strategic alliances and networks (to address human **rights** issues)

Only two program focus areas were taken up during this exercise, viz. gender and Rights-based approach. The third PFA component of Governance component was not discussed because just a week prior to this exercise the project staff had undergone their first formal training on the subject of "Local Governance." Hence it was seen as being too premature to assess this component.

##### **D.1. Gender**

The project's empowerment framework enjoins upon it to address gender issues strategically. The Human Empowerment Index that the project is attempting to develop comprises certain gender-sensitive indicators. The progressive indicators that constitute the community-based monitoring system try to measure impact/ outcomes in gender.

Overall the results of the PSMI (Annexure 2.3; 2.4; 2.6; and 2.8) indicate that, at an average:

- The inclusion of gender (and social class) in on-going planning and implementation has been rated as '4', which means this element is met quite well.
- The project's conformity with good practices to promote gender has been rated '3', which means the project reasonably meets this element.
- The incorporation of gender-disaggregated indicators has been rated as '4', which again means that the project meets this element quite well.

To assess this component more deeply, the participants were divided into small groups so that they could discuss how gender was (or was not) integral to the project's strategy, implementation, tracking system, partnership and staff capacity building.

The output of the group work (*Annexure 4*) was presented to the plenary. The following sections summarise the discussions within small groups and the plenary.

#### ***D.1.1. Issues***

- **Women's participation:** As a strategy, the project tries to ensure the involvement of at least 50% of all women in the community in the AOL process and participation in community institutions such as school education committees and community action groups.
- **Networks:** The project supports linkages and networks that further strengthen women's activities. Although it has not built any new networks, it has supported existing networks such as DHIMSA. These networks focus on tribal issues. Membership in DHIMSA places the project strategically to take up gender issues among tribals.

- **Data collection:** In its implementation, the project collates gender-disaggregated data and women's perceptions while preparing community action plans.
- **Indicators:** The progressive indicators of the project's CBMS measure impact/ outcome level changes in gender. The project is also attempting to develop a Human Empowerment Index. Some of the measures in this Index are gender sensitive.
- **Gender as ITDA agenda:** Gender has yet to find a place on the agenda for collaborative action with ITDA.
- **Quality of participation:** Women's participation is viewed in terms of numbers and not quality of participation.
- **Staff issues:** There are no mechanisms to track issues among staff pertaining to gender or NGO capacities in gender promotion. Staff capacity in gender is limited. These deficits need to be bridged by encouraging viewing of each training element with a gender lens. Training needs to emphasise the development of facilitation skills and knowledge base.
- **PNGO capacity:** PNGOs have only limited capacity to carry out gender-related analysis and practice. They have initiated some individual activities, such as convening women's day, or co-ordinating sporadic struggle through community-based groups such as *Jai Sangam* for equal wages between women and men. However, the understanding and strength of PNGOs is uneven. Since the project *per se* has not focussed on advancing gender work yet, it has been unable to push the premise that working with gender increases the effectiveness of PNGO implementation. As of now, no explicit systems exist for building PNGOs staff capacity.
- **Training:** The project does not use any specific training module for gender. Rather, it has attempted to incorporate the gender component in many modules, such as for community health workers and traditional birth attendants. It was discussed that incorporating 'gender' as merely a

chapter/section of a training module was inappropriate, rather the emphasis ought to be on highlighting the cross-cutting nature of the theme.

#### ***D.1.2. Key Lessons Learned***

- **Gender Integration:** The project has yet to develop a training module explicitly dealing with gender. Merely adding a gender session in ongoing training and using conventional methods such as lectures hardly helps to build women's capacities, since they are unfamiliar with the medium. **The absence of a training module appropriate to women's specific learning methods hinders the enhancement of women's knowledge and skills.**
- **Documentation of Learning:** Important 'moments' have been reported from the project's many activities. In some sites, when women come for training, their husbands and sons accompany them. They wait patiently while the sessions are on, and escort their mothers and wives back once the sessions are over. This represents a tremendous transformation in gender relations, but does not get documented in the project's regular reports. **There is need to develop better documentation mechanisms for measuring the transformation the project is bringing about in gender relations among the tribal community.**
- **Gender Accountability:** Since gender is perceived as an add-on to the project's existing activities, it is not usually made explicit in staff plans. Hence, staff accountability to attaining positive gender outcomes tends to be low. **The absence of gender being incorporated within each IOPs hinders adequate discussion and analysis of the concerns and issues.**

#### ***D.1.3. Overall Recommendations***

- The project needs to ensure qualitative participation of women, such as their participation in training programs. In particular, it needs to advocate with ITDA on incorporating gender concerns in its analysis and strategy.

- The project needs to regularly document good practices used by the project for promoting gender.
- The project needs to revisit its monitoring indicators so that activities can consciously incorporate a gender-lens.
- The project needs to further strengthen staff capacities in gender.
- The project should nominate focal person to oversee gender issues in the project.
- The project needs to evolve a strategy to address the problem of low girls' enrolment. This will address access to resources and control over decision-making within the household and communities.
- The project staff needs to be supported with an understanding of the local issues based on gender perspectives to make the project's interventions more relevant to the tribal context
- The organisation's gender equity and diversity and anti-harassment policies need to be disseminated.

## **D.2. Rights and advocacy**

The project's empowerment framework enjoins upon it to identify and address issues of rights-violation in its project area. The Human Empowerment Index that it is attempting to develop is an important step in breaking down rights issues into simple indicators that can be tackled. Disaggregated results of the PSMI (Annexure 2.3; 2.4; 2.6; and 2.8) indicate that:

- The issue of social inclusion (including gender) in planning and implementation gets a fairly high score of '4'.
- A score of '3' on the project's conformity with good practices to promote rights shows that the project could do better on this although essentially it meets this requirement reasonably well.
- The score of '4' shows that the project addresses specific issues of vulnerable communities very well.

- To assess this component more deeply, district-wise small working groups were formed and the participants discussed rights-related issues and constraints specific to their respective districts. The output of the group work (*Annexure 5*) was presented to the plenary. The following sections summarise the discussions within small groups and the plenary.

#### **D.2.1. Issues**

- **Preparing and disseminating micro-plans:** The project has facilitated the formation of Micro-level plans, and shared its results with members of wider networks such as DHIMSA.
- **Vulnerability studies:** Diagnostic and vulnerability studies conducted by the project have enabled the project to draw inferences related to land rights. The project has been entrusted with the verification and documentation of possession status in 7000 land redistribution cases. The project represents these cases to the ITDA and *Lok Adalats* for settlement.
- **Mobilization:** In one of the districts, the project animators played a crucial role in mobilising and supporting *ashramshala* students to stage a protest against corrupt staff of the local tribal schools. This prompted the ITDA Project Officer to take immediate action against the erring school staff, viz., the Headmasters and the teachers for their alleged corruption and high-handed attitude. This encouraged the animators from other communities to pick up similar rights-related issues in their respective localities.
- **Training:** Village secretaries and ward members have received training on tribal land and governance issues. This has promoted greater transparency and has advanced the scope of people's right to information. It has at the ground level ensured that records of all financial and other transactions are made available to the community on a Public Notice Board.
- **Greater community engagement:** The project has not yet been able to adequately sensitise existing community institutions such as schools/village education committees (VEC/SEC) vis-à-vis their responsibilities in holding

service providers accountable. Instances of holding Government functionaries accountable have been sporadic. For example, village elders were not involved actively in planning the student protests such as the one mentioned above. As a result there was little or no community support to such activities.

- **Weak Documentation:** As with the general approach to documentation, the project needs to better document how the project strategies and interventions have led to the realisation of rights at the community-level.
- **Staff skills:** Both project and NGO staff are not adequately equipped to handle land rights issues;
- **Habitation plans:** Habitation plans at the Panchayat level with appropriate community engagement are yet to be drawn up.
- **AOL:** AOL at community level has been inadequate. Many issues pertaining to access of tribal communities to resources have yet to be taken up.
- **Accountability:** Community plans do not fully incorporate the component of holding Panchayats accountable.

#### **D.2.2. Key Lessons Learned**

- **Integration of Rights component (Empowerment) into Micro Plans:** All the four districts reported that the project was unable to fully exploit the potential of the AOL framework. Micro-plans are perceived to be mechanical exercises, rather than the articulation of local development agenda. **In the absence of institutionalised reflection, micro-plans have tended to become tools for project implementation rather than processes that facilitate community empowerment.**
- **Analytical evidence-gathering:** Evidence from the project is largely anecdotal and based on documentation of sporadic cases of community mobilisation. Disaggregated data that can help the project to formulate development needs of special groups such as linguistic minorities, single

women and orphaned children are largely absent from the project's database. **The absence of systematic documentation limits the project's ability to compile analytically sound evidence of what works in rights-based programming and how.**

### ***D.2.3. Overall Recommendations***

- Regular documentation and compilation of evidence of the project furthering tribal rights needs to be conducted
- Community-based reflection processes need to be institutionalised so that the potential of the AOL framework can be exploited more fully.
- Timely collection of and feedback to the community of the CBMS data collected data must be done.
- Micro-level plans must propose to hold PRIs responsible and accountable to the community.
- There needs to be a clear stand at the project level for issue-based advocacy and governance.
- Some strategies need to be put in place to equip children to access and interact with institutions outside of their communities.
- Disaggregated information on such excluded groups as orphans, children from diverse linguistic backgrounds and single women needs to be collected and analysed. Critical analysis of local issues, such as social exclusion, will help the project to take relevant decisions.

## **E. KEY PROJECT-RELATED ISSUES: MONITORING, LEARNING AND DOCUMENTATION**

The project's AOL framework enhanced the need for appropriate monitoring and documentation mechanisms that would contribute to both measuring progress, organisational learning and community empowerment. In particular, the project uses a community-based monitoring system (CBMS) that would enable

communities to participate in generating relevant data to measure progress against the objects of the project.

## **E.1. Monitoring**

The system for monitoring the project has been tailored to its context, overarching goal and strategies. The need for a customised monitoring system emanates from its unique project design and strategies. Though monitoring in all the projects revolves around one important goal - knowing how effective our efforts have been', the point of departure in designing the system in STEP has been 'who should make these judgements and on what basis'. Generally speaking, most conventional systems of monitoring are primarily designed to serve as management mechanisms to gather critical information basically to control internal delivery system and to enhance the project's efficiency. On the contrary, any project that aims to empower the community should have a system that is built upon people and all the important stakeholders who together decide on deciding together how progress should be measured and on what action should be taken based on these measurements. Such a system embeds the rights-based approach into development and strengthens governance and accountability as well.

### ***E.1.1. Issues***

- The Community-based monitoring has yet to be institutionalised. Reliability of data from the 'field' is questionable.
- Unlike the VSS and SHGs, the project has no base registers from which the data can be collected. The eighteen types of indicators for health, education and micro-finance that are tracked every month depend entirely on minutes from the CAG meetings.

- Baring a few Govt. officials, in general there is lack of demand for this data among Government counterparts .

### ***E.1.2. Key Lessons Learned***

- **Delay in development of Software package:** The success of any monitoring system rests on the timely preparation and procurement of appropriate data systems. When the monitoring system is community-based, the need for packages to be in place at the appropriate time becomes even more significant, given the scale, scope and criticality of the data being collected. **Delays in procurement and set up of data packages hindered the processing, analysis and utilisation of the CBMS data.**
- **Management support:** Over the past two years the project staff along with the NGO partners had undergone capacity building in CBMS. However, the managers have not been able to undertake field visits as per the committed frequency. **The need for support by project staff does not reduce when monitoring is community-based. On the contrary, this support in terms of field visits and feedback has to be regular and consistent.**
- **Capacity building of frontline workers:** Since the animators are unable to see trends in the data that they collect, they are unable to relate these figures to the outcomes of their efforts. Consequently, they find the entire exercise meaningless. This often results in carelessness and inaccuracies in the data collection process thus jeopardising the whole reporting system. **Limited capacity to analyse community-level data and trends makes data collection an extremely mechanical task for frontline workers.**

### ***E.1.3. Recommendations***

- Training should be imparted to animators. Data utilisation should be enhanced at the community/animator level so that the entire task is

perceived as a meaningful one. This is the only way to better motivate the animators and being in greater accuracy in the data and effectiveness in the project implementation. Similarly capacity building of CARE and PNGO staff on using computers is a must..

- Ensure adherence of staff to monitoring standards and commitments made at meetings;
- Random checks need to be reinforced. The base registers should be maintained very carefully.
- Institutionalise community-based monitoring system (CBMS) among the project participants.

## **E.2. Learning and Documentation**

Learning is both tacit and explicit, and is crucial to the successful implementation as well as integral to the philosophy of a project such as STEP. In the same vein, documentation of project processes and learning are also critical to the project. Despite this fact, there are a number of issues that constrain the scope for learning and documentation in the project.

### ***E.2.1. Issues***

- There are structural and operational constraints in learning, which make innovation a risk-taking activity. **Structurally**, current protocol needs impede learning and innovation based on learning. **Operationally**, time constraints restrict the opportunity to learn.
- Documentation of key processes and strategies deployed by the project has not yet been undertaken. The current mode of documentation is largely anecdotal.

### ***E.2.2. Key Lessons Learned***

- The existing project (organogram) structure, does not lend itself to recognizing and promoting learning and innovation among staff. It does not provide a link between performance, learning and career growth. As a result

the staff do not feel adequately recognized and rewarded for being innovative. Due recognition, therefore, needs to be given to innovation and risk-taking behaviour within the project. It needs to be linked to career pathing.

- District teams and PNGOs resist documentation as documentation is perceived as an add-on. Competing staff priorities, were highlighted as a key constraint to documentation. Existing learning forums have fallen into disuse due to individual disinterest and a lack of positive attitude towards learning. Similarly, the MoUs signed with PNGOs do not emphasize that learning is a non-negotiable component of the partnership. To promote learning, staff needs to be held responsible and accountable.
- Existing documentation relates largely to project activities and outputs, and relies on anecdotes to describe what has worked. This is mostly undertaken by existing CARE and PNGO staff. These stories of ‘human interest’ are necessary but not adequate to demonstrate the project’s contribution to empowerment and development. A more analytical approach needs to be taken towards documentation. **The absence of such an analytical approach towards documentation has restricted the project’s ability to demonstrate its impact.**

### ***E.2.3. Recommendations***

- NGO capacity needs to be built so as to improve the quality of documentation and to capture best practices.
- PMT and Quarterly meetings can form a platform for information sharing.
- Space , time and resources for innovation and documentation need to be given to staff;
- Visual documentation is urgently required.
- MOLD support for documentation will help to enhance its quality.
- PMT needs to pursue project and staff learning more seriously. In general a culture of learning needs to be promoted within the project and the PMT has a major role to play in this.

- An analytical approach to documentation is urgently required to demonstrate the project's scope and relevance.

## **F. PROJECT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

CARE has invested considerably in the project's human resources, in order to efficiently deliver the project's goals. The project's management of its human resources operates within the wider system of human resource management in CARE, with standard recruitment criterion, induction and capacity building, performance management and other policies to smoothen staff deployment in what are actually very difficult if not dangerous areas. These similarities notwithstanding, the project has special needs in terms of qualifications and aptitude of people required, capacity building (both functional and strategic) and administrative policies that recognise the uniqueness of the project context and interventions.

### ***F.1. Issues:***

1. Staff induction is inadequate.
2. Frequent staff rotation hinders district plans.
3. Staff capacity in meeting complex and multi-sectoral needs of the project, spanning PNGO management and conflict resolution, is limited.
4. High number of vacancies hinders the project's effective management.
5. Staff perceives opportunities for growth within CARE and the project to be limited.
6. Inconsistent HR and administrative policies dampen staff morale.

### ***F.2. Recommendations:***

1. With each new recruitment, the induction process should be thorough, given the complex nature of the project.
2. Rotation of staff hampers project implementation. This should be judiciously undertaken.

3. Staff capacity building is imperative, given the complex needs of the project. CARE and PNGO staff exposure to multi-sectoral projects in other CARE countries need to be explored.
4. Follow up action on Staff development through APAs should be done.
5. Delay in recruitment should be avoided. Vacancies need to be filled through regular recruitment.
6. Opportunities should be given to staff as per their skills for better utilisation of their potential so that they grow within the organisation.
7. There should be well-communicated absorption strategy as the project is coming to its end. Else uncertainty can lead to greater staff turnover.

## **ACTION PLAN**

The three-day reflection process culminated in the formulation of an Action Plan. Care was taken to ensure that these points were do-able, and indeed the responsibility was clearly laid out for its execution. The action plan (Table 1) was developed jointly by staff across levels and districts.

**Table 1: ACTION PLAN FOR BRIDGING DEFICITS**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action plan</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Support reqd.</b>	
<i>Relation with Govt.</i>	1. Unequal relation between State Govt and CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify Stand between CARE &amp; State Govt. on existing strategy and ideology using existing forums</li> </ul>	a. Clarify position at CO level b. Clarify position with donors c. Clarify position with State Govt.	Prg. Director		
	2. Unequal relation between ITDA and CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across the table discussion with Project Officers.</li> </ul>	a. Review implications of office location b. Clarify position with Project officers	Project Director/ ADMs		
	3. Inadequate donor support to CARE vis a vis Govt.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting with donor</li> </ul>	a. Use MTR to influence donor b. Sound out MTR team about office location issues		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue to be articulated at the SMT</li> </ul>	a. Communicate project position to HQ	Prg. Director	ACD-SED / CD/Unit Director-MOLD

Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
<i>M &amp; E</i>	1. Inadequate staff capacity of CARE and PNGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build capacity of staff on Project MIS (in addition to CBMS)</li> </ul>	a. Clarify monitoring requirements	M&E Officer	ADMs & TS; MOLD
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance computer-literacy among staff</li> </ul>		ADMs	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure orientation to new staff on project and M&amp;E</li> </ul>		MEO	
	2. Unreliability of data collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular supervision of frontline staff collecting quantitative and qualitative data</li> </ul>	a. Follow 'April 2004 Schedule' & other guidelines	ADMs	MEO
	3. Limited utilization of data collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use existing structure/ systems (regular district/ block/ cluster-level discussions)</li> </ul>	a. Systems-upkeep to be regular b. IS policy document to be disseminated to all staff	IS-Coordinator	ADMs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build Capacity for data analysis</li> </ul>			MEO	MOLD	

Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.	
<i>Gender</i>	1. Project activities must ensure that women actively participate in meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women participate in larger numbers</li> <li>• No ethnic/tribal/class group dominates these meetings</li> <li>• Representation of all groups in village meetings (address social exclusion) and in training programs</li> </ul>		PCs	ADMs	
	2. Modules to train CARE and PNGO staff on gender have yet to be developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training module to be institutionalized</li> </ul>	a. Contact with CASHe (who are using this module to develop similar modules in local languages) and develop modules to use locally b. Needs-assessment	TS-MF MEO	a. ADMs b. MOLD (for format, etc..)	
	3. Systems to track CARE and PNGO staff gender issues have yet to be developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly reflections</li> </ul>			ADMs	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal documentation and dissemination of information</li> </ul>			Prg. Assoc.	

Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
	4. Training elements have yet to incorporate a gender lens as they merely incorporate gender as a component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training modules to incorporate gender lens (not merely gender components) with focus on facilitation skills and knowledge building</li> </ul>		All TS	MOLD
	5. Documentation of the project's diverse engagement with gender concerns has yet to be adequately documented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of qualitative aspects of gender</li> </ul>		DO	PC/ADMs
<i>Rights-based approach</i>	1. Lack of process documentation on rights issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical analysis of social exclusion</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify issues for documentation</li> <li>Conduct documentation</li> </ol>	ADMs	
	2. CBMS through rights-lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring collection of quality data, analysis and timely feedback</li> </ul>		ADMs	
	3. Inadequate scope for reflection and learning at community, partner and CARE level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly reflections</li> </ul>		ADMs	
	4. No strategy to encourage participation of women and primitive tribal groups			ADMs	

Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
	5. Reflection on AOL not using RBA lens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that participation/ Social exclusion issues be addressed</li> </ul>		ADMs	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social audit processes/ Inclusiveness be reinforced for greater transparency</li> </ul>		ADMs	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff capacity-building</li> </ul>	Orientation to staff on RBA	MOLD	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance capacity of CBOs to hold service-providers accountable</li> </ul>		ADMs	
<i>Partnerships with NGOs</i>	1. Unequal relations between CARE & PNGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciative enquiry process</li> </ul>		ADM	Project Director
	2. No value addition from PNGOs				
	3. No accountability framework between CARE and PNGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Network of PNGOs formed at project level</li> </ul>			
	4. Staff capacity on handling government and NGO partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building of staff both for Program and Support</li> </ul>			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building of CARE &amp; PNGO staff on financial guideline</li> </ul>	Module on financial capacity building among field staff developed		

Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasise relationships and attitudes rather than tasks (but not at the cost of accountability and quality)</li> </ul>			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transform project quarterly reviews into reflection exercises</li> </ul>	Quarterly reflections	Prg. Director	MOLD
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct institutional capacity building for PNGOs</li> </ul>	CB Training	ADMs	
<i>Human resource development</i>	1. Inadequate induction of new staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Induction process initiated</li> </ul>	Issues to be raised with HR.	PSU	HR
	2. Inadequate investment on staff capacity-building, particularly international exposure of CARE experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address structural constraint (decentralization) with HR vis-à-vis staff capacity building</li> <li>Explore opportunity for staff exposure</li> </ul>			
	3. Staff rotation is undertaken without any focus on project implementation for district projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judiciousness in transfers</li> </ul>			
	4. APA does not recognize work performance that staff have to undertake in addition to their current responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final rating to be decided between supervisor and direct reports</li> <li>Rating to recognize additional work load</li> </ul>			
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Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
	5. Project/ Mission does not utilize the skills present in staff	Position staff as per their potential		Prg. Dir/ HR	
<i>Documentation and Learning</i>	1. Documentation of key processes has yet to be undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture regular lessons through reports and share during PMT meetings</li> </ul>	a. regular reports b. CB of PNGOs	ADMs	MOLD
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document key themes across the project</li> </ul>	a. Identify specific issues b. Document these	DO	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document larger processes and outcomes of the project</li> </ul>	a. higher-level issues identified b. documented	MOLD External consultant	
	2. NGO's capacity in documenting processes, best practices and lessons learned has to be enhanced	1. NGO staff capacity to be enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train and Support NGOs in process documentation</li> </ul>	DO	MOLD
	3. Culture of learning at project and Organization-level yet to be institutionalised	Encourage cross-learning within the project	a. Each staff to develop 'love for learning'. b. Documents available at project office for staff (Resource center)	Prg. Dir.	MOLD
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Themes	Issues	Recommendations	Action plan	Person responsible	Support reqd.
	4. Structural constraints, such as adherence to protocol, inhibit learning/ innovation by project staff	Structural constraint issues to be discussed at the Project Core team level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Encourage innovation</li> <li>b. Issues to be raised at PMT</li> <li>c. Districts to share learnings at PMTs by rotation</li> <li>d. Forums at district-level/ NGO-level for reflection an appreciative inquiry</li> </ul>	Prg. Dir	

## ANNEXURES

**ANNEX 1:**

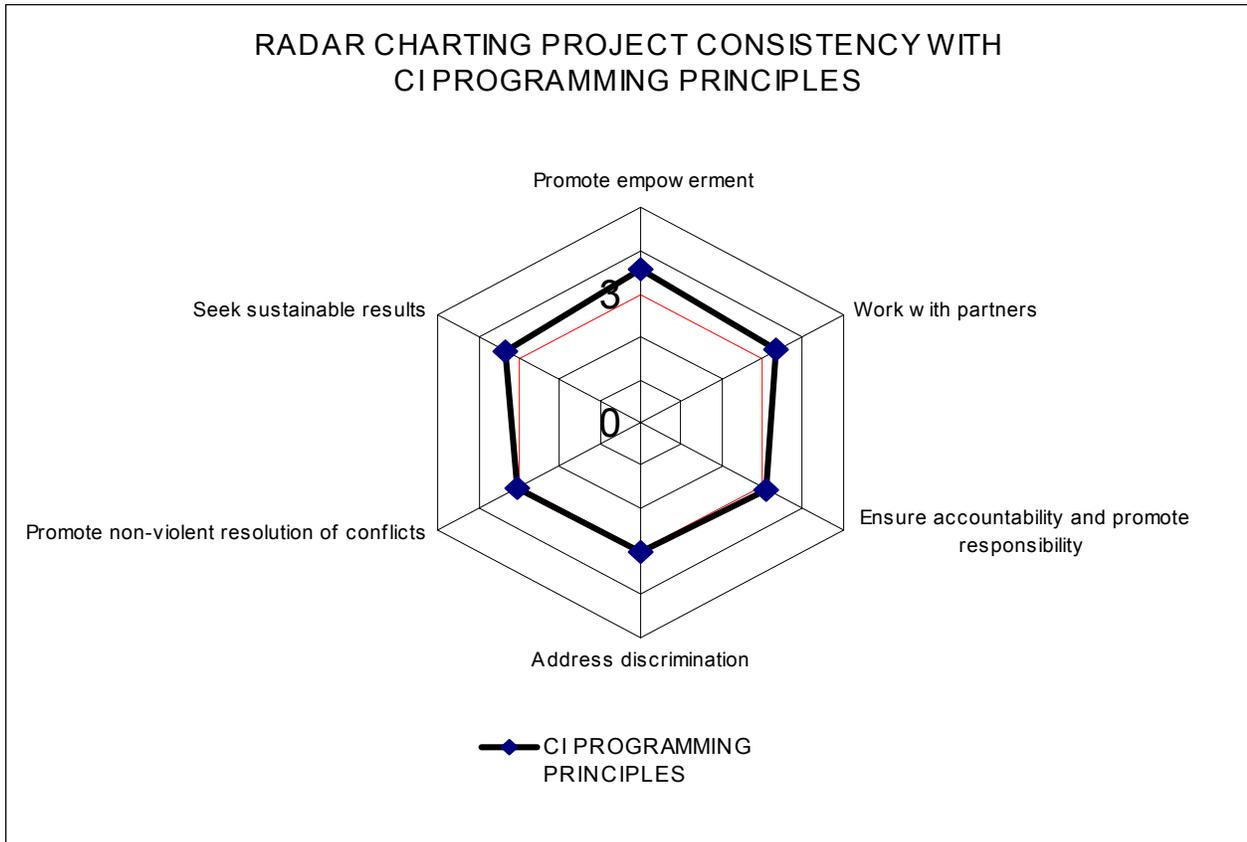
**AGENDA FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXERCISE  
SUSTAINABLE TRIBAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT  
DATE : 23-25, FEB. 2005**

**PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE EXERCISE**

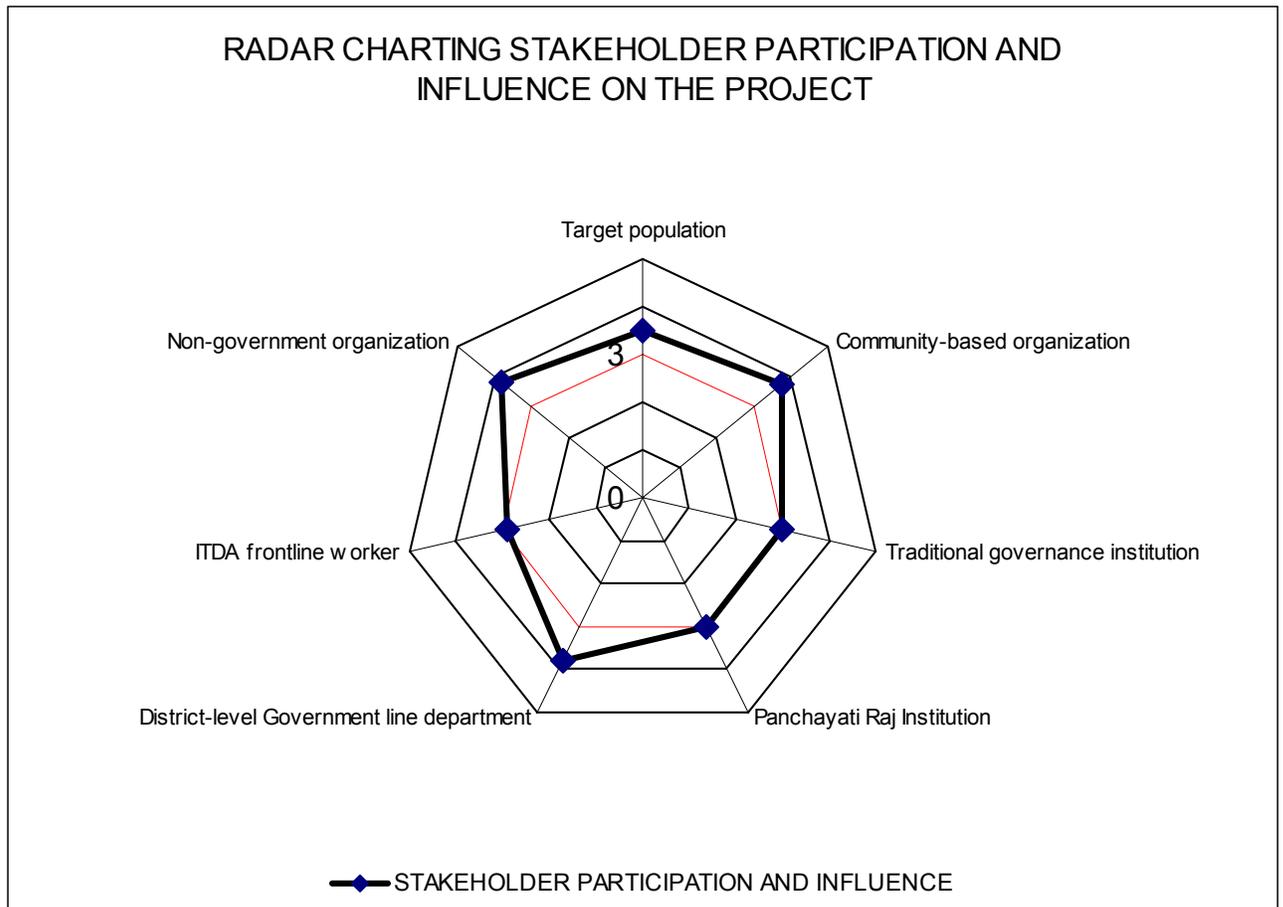
<b>Dates</b>	<b>PRE-LUNCH (9.30 - 1.00)</b>	<b>POST-LUNCH (2.00 - 6.00)</b>
23/02/05	Introduction, objectives and expected outputs of reflective practice  <b>Session 1:</b> Over view of project achievements: PSMI/ Care International Programming Principles assessment report presentation, triad work, gallery walk and plenary	<b>Session 2:</b> Gender equity and diversity- small group work (strategy, implementation, tracking, partnership and staff skill) and plenary
24/02/05	<b>Session 3:</b> Rights-based approaches and programming principles- small group work on elements (holistic analysis, participation, partnerships, accountability and transparency) and plenary	<b>Session 4:</b> Partnership and advocacy issues in STEP- Group work and plenary
25/02/05	<b>Session 5:</b> program support issues Plenary.  <b>Session 6:</b> Broad strokes- key lessons learned by program and by organisation- summary and conclusions	

**ANNEX 2: STANDARD WISE FINDINGS**

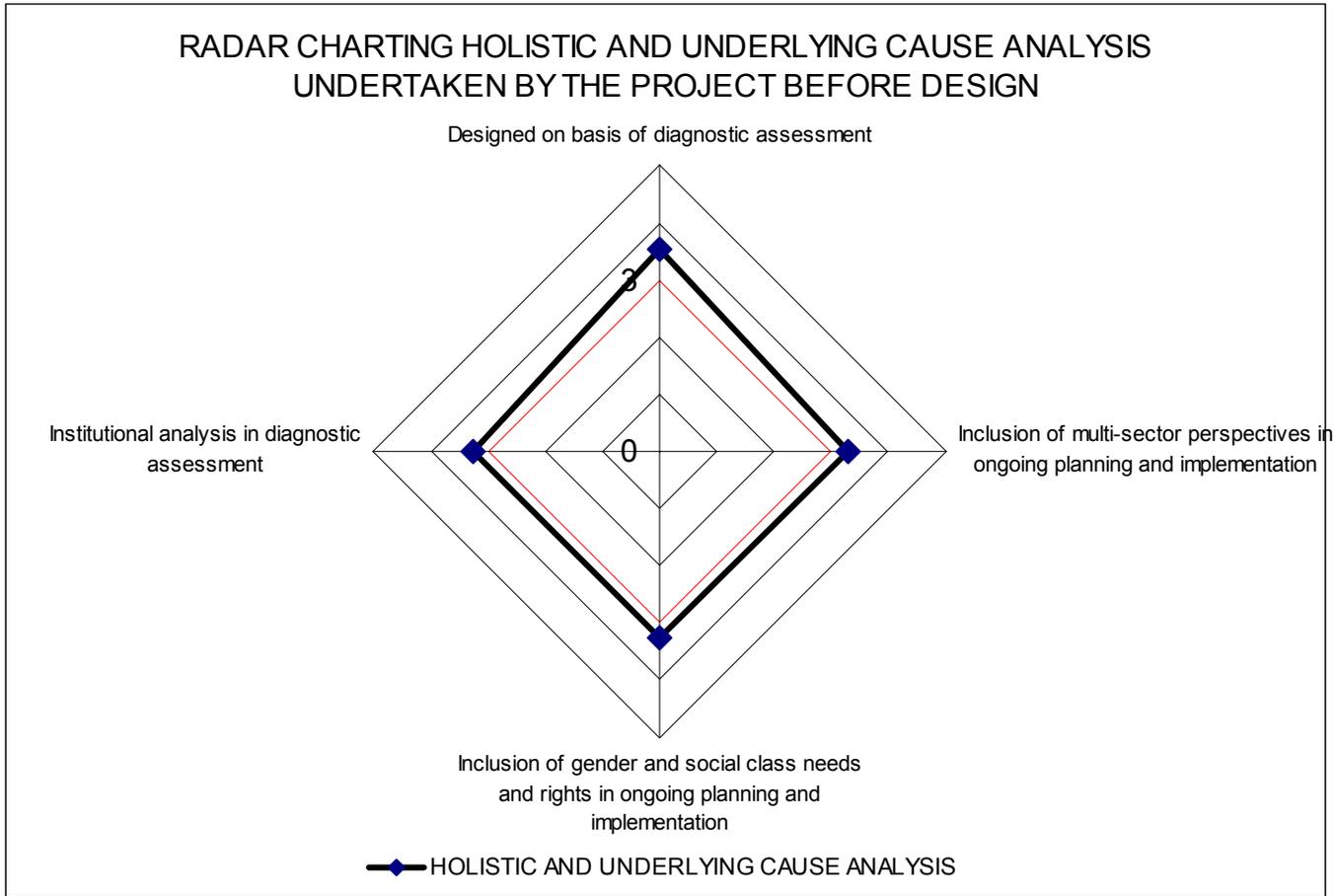
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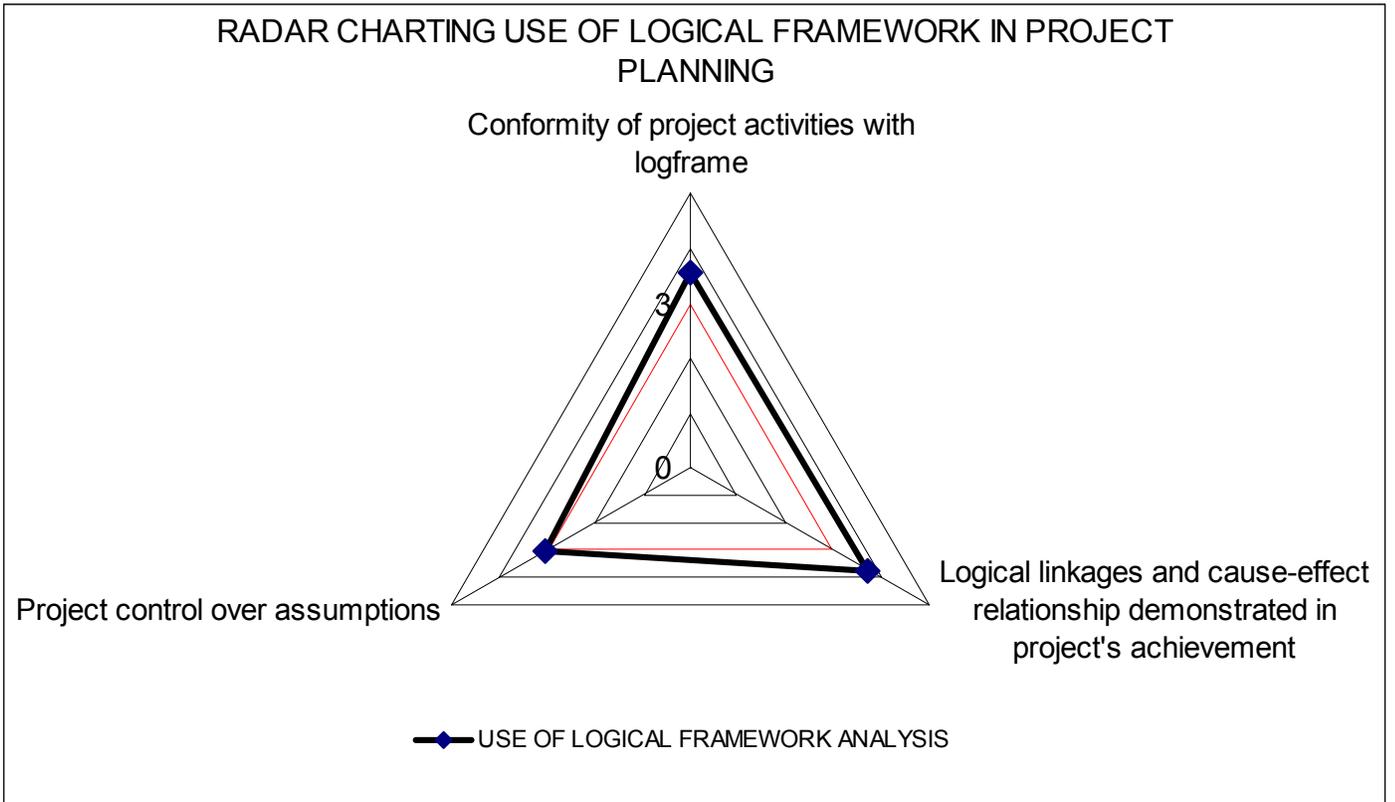
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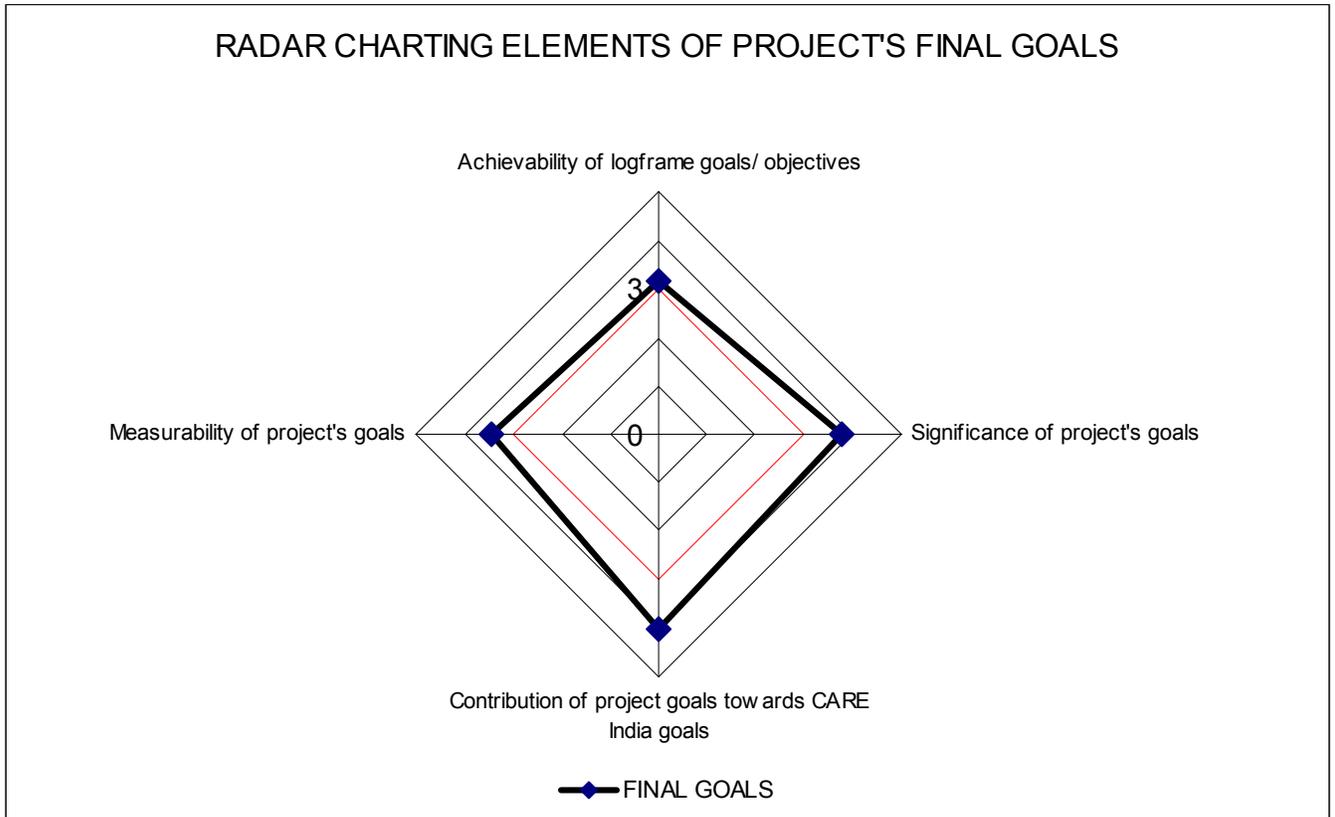
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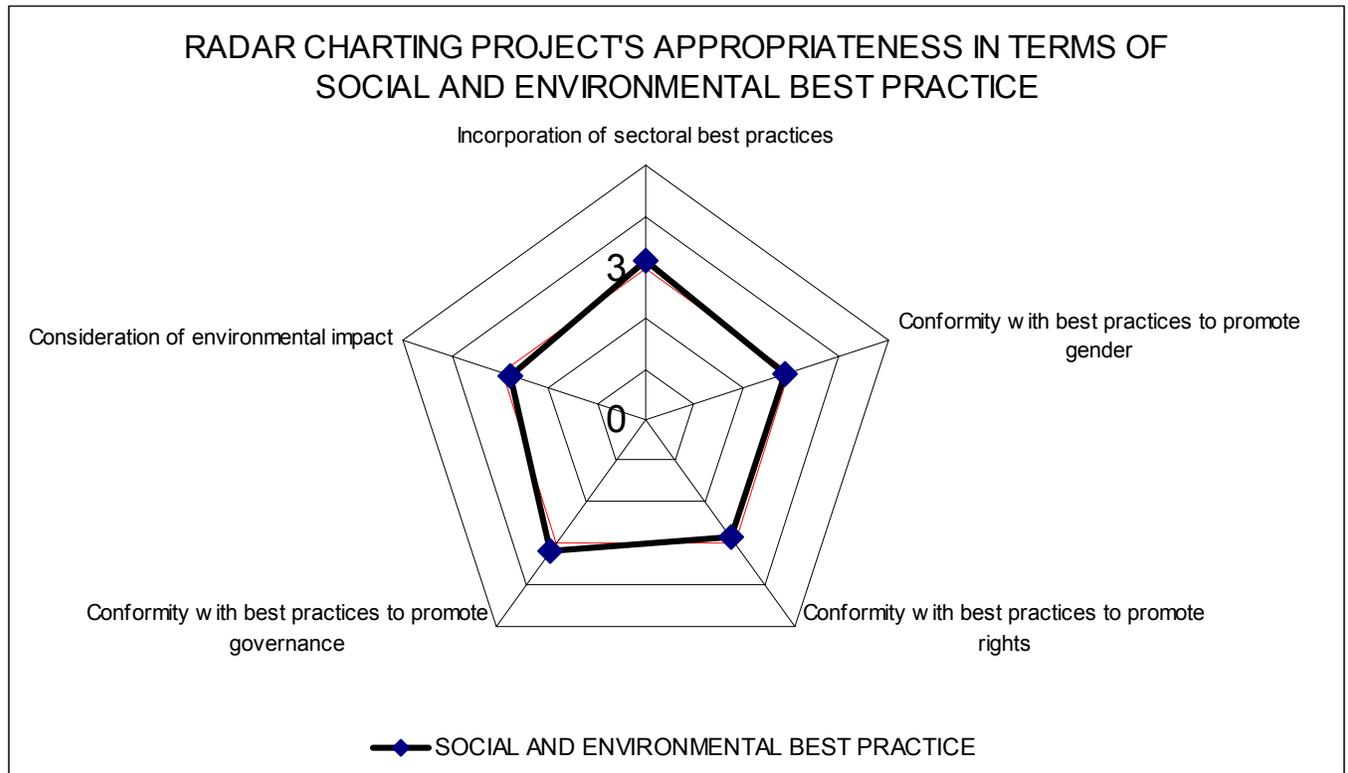
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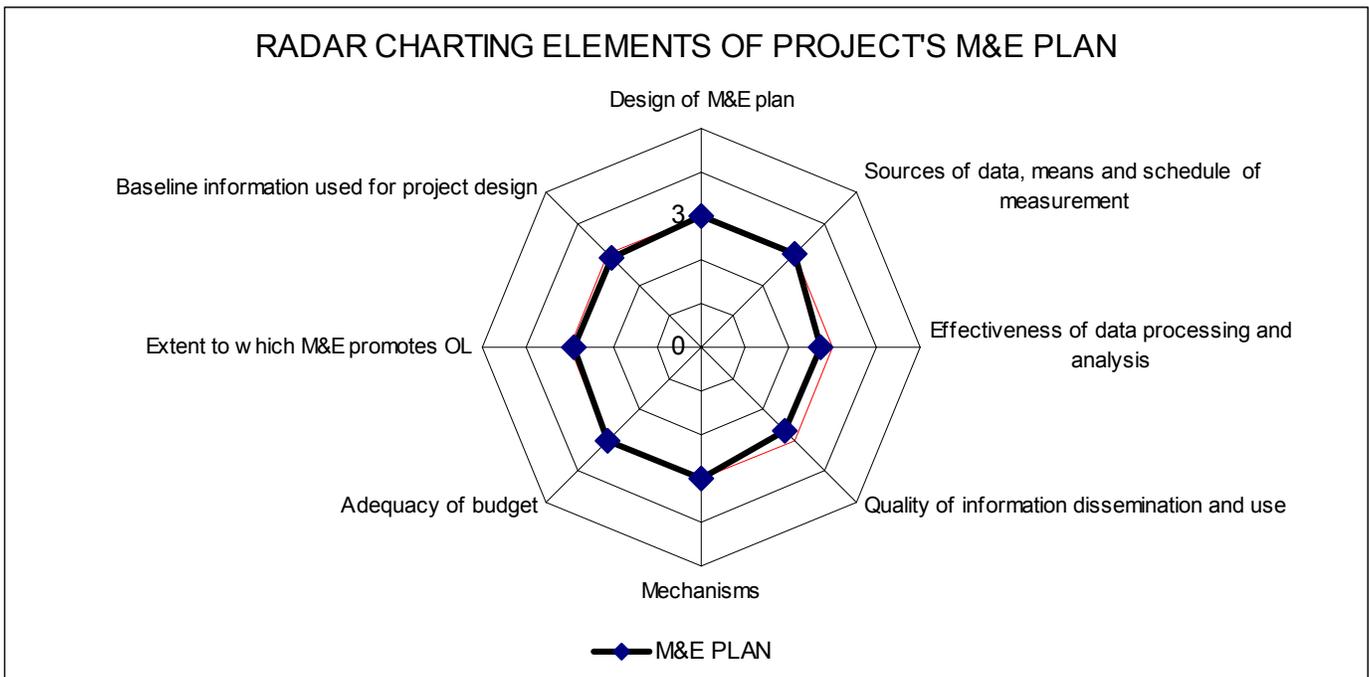
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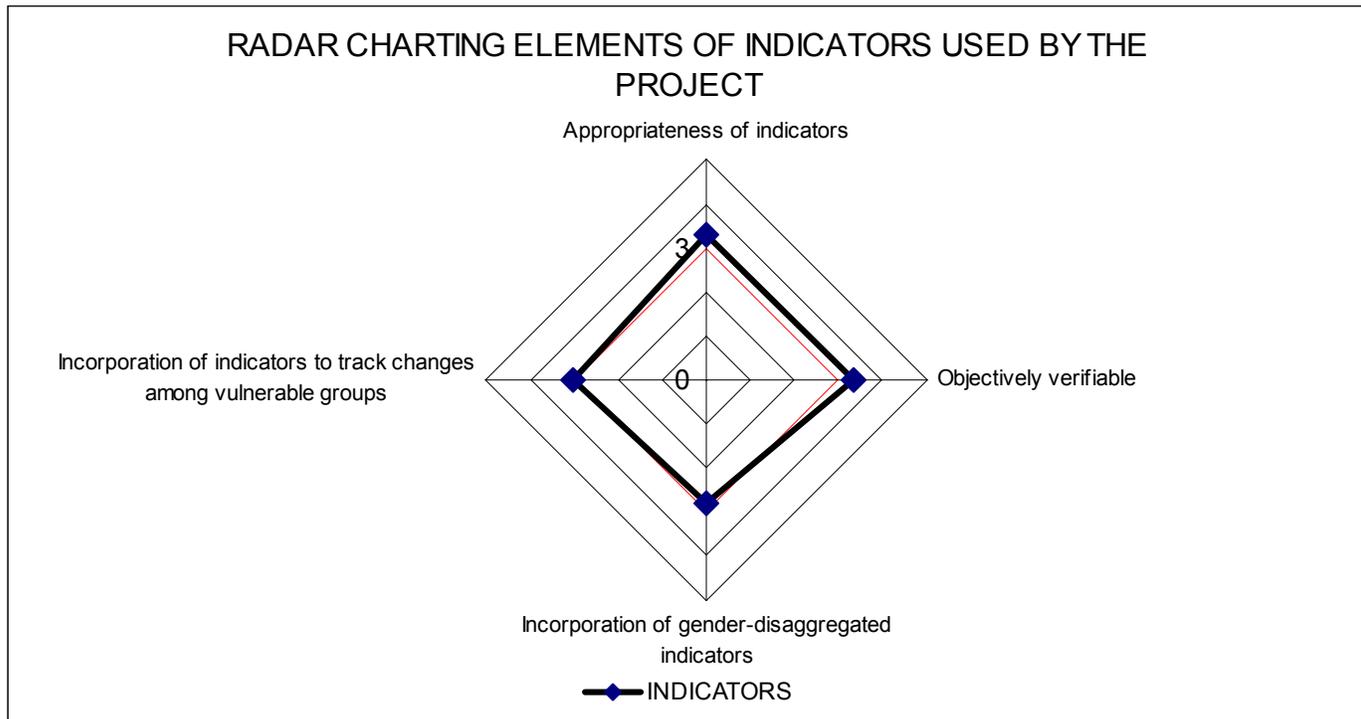
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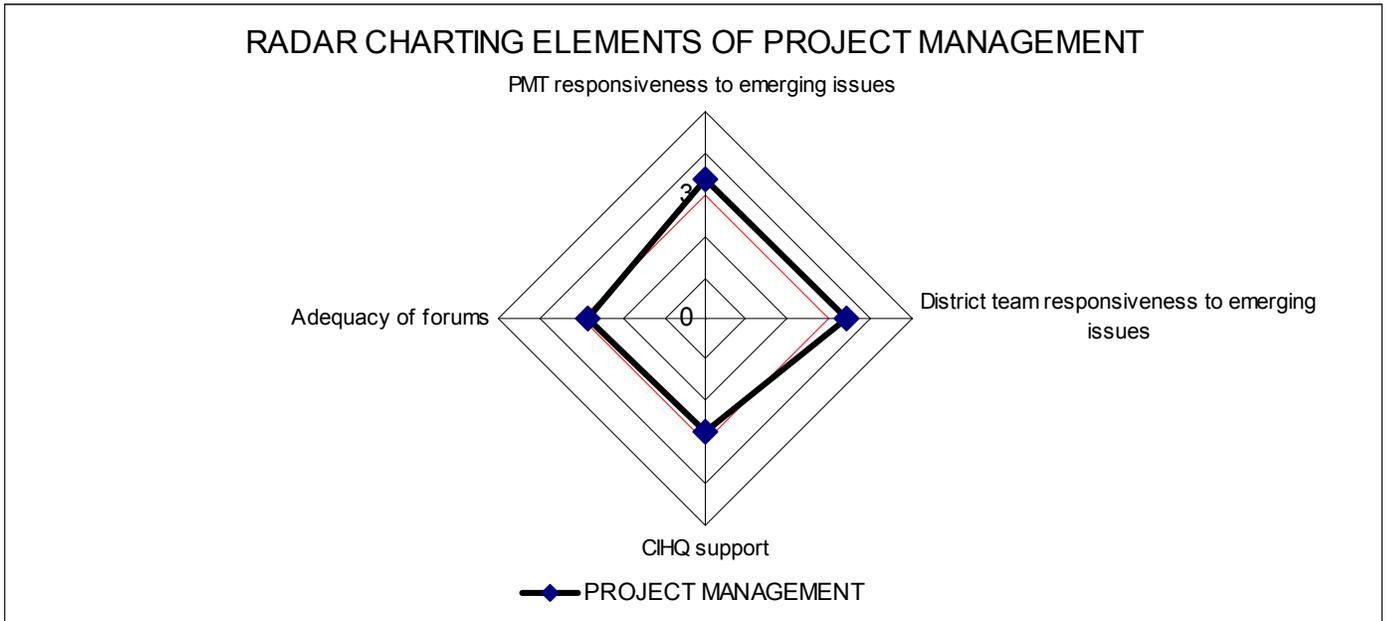
**Annex 2.7.**



Annex 2.8.



Annex 2.9.





**Annex 3: Key achievements and limitations**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Identify five key things achieved</b>	<b>Identify five key things that could have been achieved</b>	<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Group ONE:</b> <b>Ajay Reddy,...</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Linkage of community prioritized needs to resources from mainstream agencies</li> <li>2. Transfer of skills, access to information and building management capacities of Partner NGOs, communities, CBOs and Government frontline functionaries. Harnessing of traditional knowledge and wisdom for effective programming: Grain Banks, WHS, and Drinking Water Systems. STEP strategy accepted and recognized as a model that facilitates community empowerment.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Stakeholder Management, specifically the Government counterparts and donors.</li> <li>• Synergy with other projects / programs and government initiatives.</li> <li>• Creating visibility and recognition for the project</li> <li>• Promoting innovation in programming</li> <li>• Learning Environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No organizational stand vis-a vi working with government and also facilitating community empowerment</li> <li>• Inability to take Risks and focus on compliances.</li> <li>• Systems and Procedures as end in itself rather than facilitating quality programming.</li> <li>• Lack of clear accountability, authority and responsibility centres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote an environment where innovation, initiatives and risk taking are encouraged.</li> <li>• Focus on both the Long Term and Short Term goals.</li> <li>• Responsive Systems.</li> <li>• Fixing of accountability and responsibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Group TWO:</b> <b>Basant Mohanty,....</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community participation has become an integral component of all programs/ activities</li> <li>2. Transparency and accountability at community level</li> <li>3. Reflection mechanism is institutionalized through Action</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional M &amp; E system</li> <li>• Positive discrimination could have in favour of PTG community.</li> <li>• Documentation and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting activities in line due to want of timely approval</li> <li>• No formal induction and orientation to staff</li> <li>• Frequent change of personnel in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely submission of project plan and feedback from stakeholders.</li> <li>• Proper HR plan for the project</li> </ul>

	<p>Oriented Learning</p> <p>4. Structural convergence with key stakeholders</p> <p>5. Quality Capacity Building programmes</p>	<p>manualization of best practices could have been focused, hence lack of visibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could have effectively captured the immediate consequences of many of our interventions</li> </ul>	<p>government and staff turnover.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often succumb to pressure and landing up doing unplanned activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations at higher and institutionalize the collaborations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group THREE: Suryamani Roul,....</b></p>	<p>1. AOL process initiated and accepted at the community level. (MLPs existing)</p> <p>2. Demand generation for services at community level</p> <p>3. Increased knowledge and awareness among partners – changing attitude of partners</p> <p>4. Enhanced responsiveness of the service providers</p> <p>5. Created models for replication (drinking water projects)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages with local Governance still on paper</li> <li>• Planning still confined at the habitation level</li> <li>• Institutional engagements at the ITDA level and above</li> <li>• Issue-based advocacy and policy change</li> <li>• 5. Use and application of M &amp; E data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untimely approval of Annual Plans</li> <li>• Process vs project time frame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIHQ has to take a more proactive approach</li> <li>• Advocacy for Project Life Extension</li> </ul>

<p>Group FOUR: Shamik Trehan....</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community Based Organisations are strengthened and able to achieve their plans and generated the demand. Inculcate the habit of the self monitoring. Food security achieved .</li> <li>2. Grass root level service providers are strengthened ,their understanding and the roles and responsibilities, sensitized towards the needs of the PTG.</li> <li>3. Minimised the Gaps between the Community and the Service providers.</li> <li>4. Inaccessible habitations are supported with irrigation facility.</li> <li>5. Provisioned the wage to the community during the lean period</li> <li>6. Equal payment of the wages for both men and women</li> <li>7. All the SHG groups are graded and created a data base at the dist.level</li> <li>8. Defunct groups are strengthened through capacity building and handholding support.</li> <li>9. Minimized the gaps between the Govt and NGO.</li> <li>10. Govt.accepted the STEP strategy of the Community level planning process and the community initiatives.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The findings of the CBMS are not shared.</li> <li>• User friendly methodology for the community level trainings.</li> <li>• Process documentation.</li> <li>• Support for the Advocacy.</li> <li>• Synergy with other projects / programs and government initiatives.</li> <li>• developing of replication centres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No organizational stand vis-a vi working with government and also facilitating community empowerment</li> <li>• Inability to take Risks and focus on Compliances.</li> <li>• Lack of clear accountability, authority and responsibility centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special action plan for governance and advocacy</li> <li>• Focus on both the Long Term and Short Term goals.</li> <li>• Responsive Systems.</li> <li>• Fixing of accountability and responsibility.</li> </ul>
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#### **Annex 4: Small Group Outputs for Gender**

To enable intensive reflection, the participants discussed gender vis-à-vis the following dimensions of programming in smaller groups:

- a) Programme strategy
- b) Project implementation
- c) Tracking system
- d) Partnership
- e) Staff capacity

##### **a). Programme Strategy**

- **Achievements:** The participants pointed out that although there was no strategic plan to incorporate gender in the project, there were certain activities, which furthered the gender focus. For instance:
  - The project ensures that at least 50% of all women in the community are involved in the Action-Oriented-Learning process and participate in community institutions such as school education committees and community action groups.
  - The project supports linkages and networks that further support women's activities, such as supporting women in SHGs for income generation activities.
- **Deficits:** Participants pointed to key deficits in gender being integrated with the project strategy, such as:
  - Gender not being on the agenda for collaborative action with ITDA
  - Women's participation viewed as a function of numbers and not quality of participation. Gender component is only limited to orientation and sensitisation.
- **Recommendations:** Participants along with the facilitator identified certain actions that could help them fill the deficits. These were as follows:

- Advocacy with ITDA on incorporating gender concerns in its analysis and strategy.
- Document diverse engagements with gender, and lessons learned therein.
- Develop indicators to track qualitative changes.
- Design interventions that address the qualitative elements of gender rights, particularly through capacity building. For instance, the training modules and even methods of delivering these modules have to be gender-sensitive.
- Strategy to address the problem of low girls' enrolment has to be evolved . This will address access to resources and control over decision-making within the household and communities.
- Capacity building of staff as well as PNGOs to work on the gender issues.
- Proper documentation is needed to capture the Gender components which are currently not done.

#### **b). Programme Implementation**

- **Activities:** While the participants drew up an inventory of all their interventions, key elements pertaining to gender-promotion are pointed out:
  - Collate gender-disaggregated data and women's perceptions while preparing community action plans.
  - Involve women in CBOs to participate in decision-making.
  - Capacity building of women alongside men through training and cross visits, including exposure to best practices in similar projects.
  - Promote linkages of women's groups with formal lending institutions and informal community institutions such as village grain banks

- **Effects and impact:** Again, although participants drew up an inventory of what they perceived to be the effect/ impact of their activities, few key outcomes may be noted:
  - Improved access to government schemes and resources for women. These include the state's welfare programs as well as natural resources. Moreover, women's nutrition and health behaviors and services have both increased, as evident in the positive change in indicators such as safe deliveries and immunisation.
  - Opportunities for participation and representation for women in joint forums along with men. While women's participation in CBOs has certainly increased, their representation to concerned departments along with their men folk have also registered a rise.
  - Also, women have themselves realised the potential of collective action. For instance, in many cases they have been able to bargain for equal wages for both men and women
  - Perhaps most importantly, women perceive an improvement in their status at the community level, and in their mobility outside the community.
  - Strategic planning is crucial to sustainability. To that end, interventions must be institutionalised across districts, and not be based on the community's gender needs. Rather, they should be able to address the strategic gender interests of the community.
  
- **Opportunities:** Participants highlighted the following opportunities for the promotion of gender:
  - The presence of women's organisations, networks and federations through which several issues may be raised
  - Pro-active government programmes that favour women's networks and organisations in routing of development funds
  - State Government focus on Reproductive and Child Health programme

- Political events, such as local government (Panchayat) elections have to be strategically made use of. The project team is considering to encourage women to contest elections even on general seats in the forthcoming elections

### **c). Gender Tracking System**

- **Analytical framework:** Participants explained that the project operated within an empowerment framework. In this empowerment framework, gender is a key component.
- **Tools/instruments:** The community-based monitoring system (CBMS) is used to track progress on gender.
- **Indicators:** The progressive indicators that constitute the CBMS are used to measure impact/ outcome level changes in gender. The project is also attempting to develop a Human Empowerment Index. Some of the measures in this Index are gender sensitive.
- **Training modules:** The project does not use any specific training module for gender. Rather, it has attempted to incorporate the gender component in many modules, such as for community health workers and traditional birth attendants. This year an exclusive module for women PRI members is being planned. The facilitator cautioned participants that incorporating 'gender' as merely a chapter/ section of a training module was inappropriate, rather the emphasis ought to be on highlighting the cross-cutting nature of the theme.
- **Staff issues:** Participants reported that there are no systems to track staff gender issues or any mechanisms to track NGO capacity in gender promotion.

**d). Partnerships**

- **PNGO capacity:** Participants expressed the view that PNGOs did in fact have the capacity to carry out gender work, but only partially. They have initiated some interventions such as convening women's day, or co-ordinating sporadic struggle through community-based groups such as Jai Sangam for equal wages between women and men. Moreover, the understanding and strength of PNGOs is uneven. Since the project per se has not focussed on advancing gender work yet, it has been unable to push the premise that working with gender increases the effectiveness of PNGO implementation.
- **Mechanism for PNGO staff capacity building:** As of now, no separate systems exist for building PNGOs staff capacity.
- **Networks:** Although CARE has not built any new networks, it has supported existing networks such as DHIMSA. These networks focus on tribal issues. Membership in DIMSA places the project strategically to take up gender issues among tribals.

**e). Staff capacity**

- **Staff capacity needs assessment:** participants admitted that staff capacity in gender is limited.
- **Deficits:** A key deficit in the project's staff capacity is the lack of gender components included training modules. These need to be bridged, not merely by integrating gender with existing models, but by encouraging the development with a gender lens. Training needs to emphasise the development of facilitation skills and knowledge base.
- **Recommendations:** The following were some of the recommendations advanced for staff capacity in gender to be built up:

- Training needs assessment for staff
- Quarterly reflection so that staff could share experiences and the project could collectively draw any lessons learned
- Understanding the local issues based on gender perspectives to make the project's interventions more relevant to the tribal context
- Dissemination of information related to organisation's gender equity and diversity and anti-harassment policies.
- Documentation of project's and team's experiences relating to gender and harassment issues
- Constitution of a gender resource working group. In fact, each IOP must incorporate the gender concern, and a Gender working group may oversee this process, and lay down the procedures.

### **Annex 5: Small Group Outputs on Rights-based approach**

The participants worked in the group and came up with the district wise presentations:

- a) Rampadcodapuram
- b) Paderu
- c) Parvathipuram
- d) Seetampeta

#### **a). Rampadcodapuram**

- **Achievements:**

- Children attending *ashramshalas* influenced the ITDA Project Officer to take action against corruption and mismanagement of resources by teachers and headmasters, corruption among them and high-handed attitude of teachers.
- The project animators performed a crucial role in mobilizing and supporting them. Animators from other communities also learned from this experience.
- Evidence that rights in land management and plantation management being addressed through project interventions.

- **Deficits:**

- The project has been unable to adequately support/ sensitise existing community institutions school/ village education committees (VEC/SEC) vis-à-vis their responsibilities in holding providers accountable.
- The project's RBA strategy has lacuna in relation to village elders, even as it has succeeded with service-providers.
- There is inadequate documentation of how the project strategies and interventions have led to the realisation of rights at the community-level.

- **Recommendations**

- There need to be a clear stand at the project level for issue-based advocacy and governance.
- Ensuring the *participation* of marginalised sections is imperative to a rights-based approach.
- The case of female young animators who motivated the children and stood against the elders was a clear example of best practices, women empowerment and the Rights component. Thus it should be adequately documented and shared with other animators so as to encourage them also.
- The team felt that in implementation level, RBA is not a problem but to link it with the donor it still needs to be taken further.

**b). Paderu**

- **Achievements**

- Diagnostic and vulnerability studies conducted by the project have enabled the project to draw inferences related to land rights. The project has also facilitated the formation of Micro-level plans, shared its results with members of wider networks such as DHIMSA, and develop strategies based on this.
- The project has been entrusted with the verification and documentation of possession status in 7000 land redistribution cases. The project represents these cases to the ITDA and Lok Adalat for settlement.
- The project also operates a legal awareness programme and is planning legal counselling interventions.
- The project has conducted capacity building for village secretaries and ward members on tribal land and governance issues.

- **Deficits**

- Lack of expertise among project and PNGO staff on land survey issues hinders technical analysis of data.
- Absence of land records, PESA guidelines and demarcation of land and forests also restricts the project's scope.
- The bilingual training modules and teaching (in Telugu and respective tribal dialects, not English and Hindi) are likely to be inadequate for children when they will access the institutions outside their immediate community, and may even restrict their interaction.

- **Recommendations**

- The project's action-oriented-learning (AOL) framework should be fully exploited to enable rights-based reflections.
- Some strategies are needed to equip these children to access and interact with institutions outside their communities.
- Dis-aggregated information on such excluded groups as orphans, children from diverse linguistic backgrounds and women have to be collected and analysed. Critical analysis of local issues, such as social exclusion, will help the project to take the relevant decisions.

### **c). Parvathipuram**

- **Achievements**

- Studies such as the diagnostic study, vulnerability study, training needs assessment and baseline survey provided the project team with data for analysing field issues.
- Records of all financial and other transactions were made available at a publicly located dissemination board.
- As in other districts, the project has established partnership with Govt (ITDA & Velgu) including line departments.

- **Deficits**

- Habitation plan at the Panchayat level has not been undertaken.
- Reflection at community level has been inadequate. Many issues pertaining to access of tribes to resources have not been taken up.
- Community plans did not incorporate accountability issues of Panchayats themselves.

- **Recommendations**

- The team felt the need of habitation plan in Panchayats and Panchayats should also be held accountable. There should be follow –up and maintenance of the community initiated projects by the Panchayat.
- Ensuring collection of quality data, analysis based on CBMS findings and timely feedback is required.
- Need for quarterly reflections at the community level. There are many access issues of tribals which is also related to information sharing.
- Panchayats must be approached with caution, since there may be an inverse correlation between community asset creation and panchayat powers. I think the group said that where Panchayats are strong, there is not necessarily a strong community micro-plan. The Parvathipuram experience shows that the community micro-plans must include plans to hold Panchayats accountable also.

**d). Seetampeta**

- **Achievements**

- The project has been able to move beyond merely ensuring participation of community members to instilling a sense of ownership among them.
- Among communities, there are tribal groups that tend to dominate, and the project has been able to involve less dominant groups, although restricted.

- **Deficits:**

No major deficit reported

- **Recommendations**

- Continuous reflection with animators is needed.
- Information sharing among staff, community and partners is required.
- The micro-plan should be determined by and based on an institutionalised reflection process.