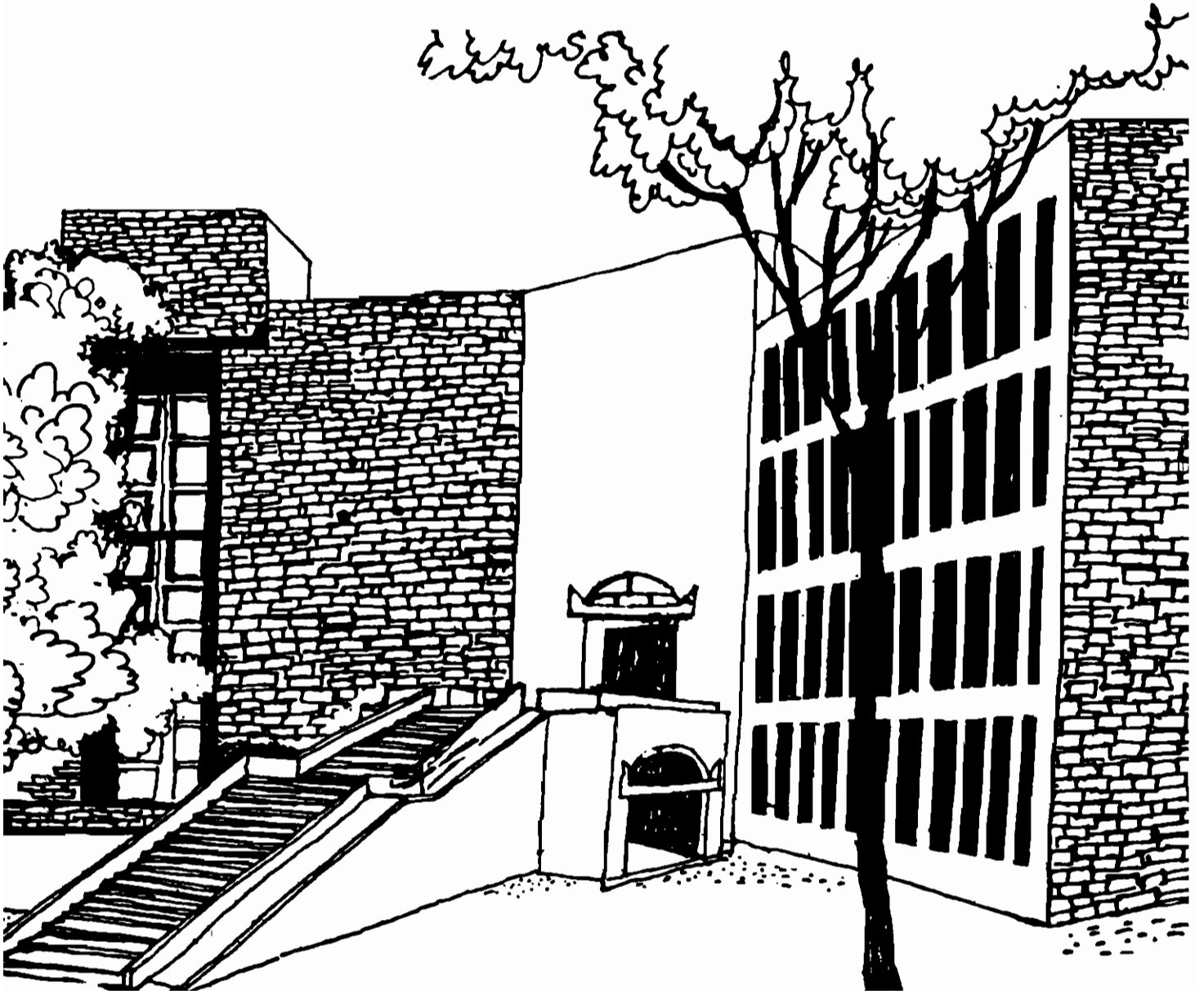




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GROWTH OF A SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATION:
A CASE STUDY OF SIDH

By

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**GROWTH OF A SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATION:
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MAY 1999

PROF. DEEPTI BHATNAGAR

**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
AHMEDABAD**

Abstract

This report is the outcome of a study of Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas (SIDH), a social change organisation working in the Jaunpur block of the Tehri Garhwal district in Uttar Pradesh. This is sequel to an earlier study carried out in 1992 which documented the emergence of SIDH. The earlier report traced the genesis of SIDH, its objectives and activities at a nascent stage. The present study reports the growth and coming of age of SIDH which now has a clear mission, focus, and a set of values. These help the organisation make conscious choices about the activities it wants to undertake because they are consistent with its mission, and the ones it does not want to undertake because they are incongruent with either SIDH's mission or values. The report documents the variety of projects and activities being run by SIDH and the resultant impact it is making through awareness-building. In its effort to usher in attitudinal and social change, SIDH also comes across as an organisation committed to constant self-reflection and internal change.

SIDH

Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas (SIDH) has completed a decade in the area of education and community development in Jaunpur block of Tehri Garhwal district in Uttar Pradesh. Since its inception in March 1989, it has made significant progress and has come to be recognised as one of the successful NGOs in the area. SIDH seems to have made a mark for itself and impacted the lives of hundreds of villagers including women and children in the area of its operation. This report documents the transition of SIDH from a nascent organization to a well-known NGO, and takes stock of its current activities and achievements.

GENESIS AND GROWTH

SIDH was registered as a not-for-profit organization in December 1989. It was set up by Anuradha Joshi and Pawan K. Gupta. Determined to contribute something substantial to help others, Anuradha Joshi and Pawan Gupta gave up their respective careers in education and management to do something more meaningful with their lives. They initially planned to undertake intensive research in correlating the concepts underlying Vipassana and Jungian psychology, and chose the Himalayas as their base. During this period they spent time in nearby villages and realised that the people in this region were acutely deprived economically and socially due to the rigid and unimaginative policies of the government. Noticing the presence of two well-wishers in their midst, the local villagers started requesting them to start schools for the village children who either did not attend school, or attended the poorly-run government schools. In a typical government-run village school, classes were held irregularly, if at all, by demotivated and ill-equipped teachers who followed outdated teaching methods

and old government syllabus with little relevance to the local problems. Anuradha and Pawan responded to the request from the village community by starting a school in one of the villages. The first primary school began when the villagers made a room available. Both Pawan and Anuradha taught at this school regularly, and soon the school became extremely popular. There was demand from neighbouring villages to start similar schools in their villages. Within a month Anuradha and Pawan started two more schools when they were offered school buildings by the villagers. When posed with the problem of manpower shortage, Anuradha and Pawan were able to attract four local young volunteers from the villages who had recently passed standard Xth. There was no formal organization and no funds till this point. Funds were contributed so far by Anuradha and Pawan personally. After the recruitment of the four young individuals as teachers, it was realised that the volunteers needed to be paid at least a nominal stipend if the schools were to continue. SIDH came into being to raise funds to run the schools.

The decision to involve local resources was important for two reasons. First, it was based on an important commitment of SIDH to the development of local people and a resolve to make them self-reliant. Second, local teachers had a higher probability of achieving teaching effectiveness because of their advantage of knowing the local dialect and the insider's familiarity with the local culture, festivals, customs, etc.

SIDH's sincere efforts were soon noticed and help started arriving from outside agencies. It came in the form of financial support and sponsorship for skill development for this budding organization. SIDH acquired a reputation for dependability and serious commitment for uplifting the lives of local villagers. In a short period of time, SIDH proved itself to be a credible organization and thus was able to attract and retain its financiers, and establish good linkages with other social service organizations in the area. A detailed account of the activities

of SIDH during its initial period of growth is given elsewhere.¹

From a single school, six people, and an informal and ambiguous work culture ten years ago, SIDH has come a long way. It now has a variety of developmental programmes running in various villages around Mussoorie; it has contributed to the emergence of considerable local talent to support developmental activities, and has provided valuable training and developmental exposure to the local human resources. SIDH now has six members on the office staff, a five member training team, four field supervisors and three sahayoginis on its field staff.

In its effort to graduate from an informal NGO to a professionally-run development organisation, and as a response to the increasing complexity of its activities, SIDH went through a strategic planning process. The strategic planning exercise included a Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis, a reappraisal of its goals and objectives, and rethinking about a suitable organisation structure which would be congruent with its emerging role as a social catalyst. With the help of external facilitators, SIDH undertook a comprehensive exercise in introspection and reflection to seek clarity about its mission, future direction, priorities and preferred action agenda for the future. This exercise helped SIDH to narrow its focus, and restructure its basket of activities by adding on projects consistent with its priorities and dropping the ones incongruent with its strategic focus. After deliberations and reflections, a mission statement was developed which captured SIDH's commitment to appropriate, holistic education as a vehicle for spreading happiness and attitudinal change. The mission statement is presented below.

¹ Bhatnagar Deepti. **Emergence of a Social Change Organization: A Case Study of SIDH**, Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Working Paper No. 1049, August 1992.

- SIDH will enable people who have been deprived of appropriate education to increase their happiness by providing holistic education and bring about a change in attitudes".

It now has a clear organizational structure which lucidly delineates work and reporting responsibilities for each staff member. The current organizational structure is presented in Appendix-A. The objective of this structure was to eliminate ambiguities and overlaps in work assignments, and spell out clear areas of work responsibilities and reporting relationships among the SIDH staff. This exercise in self renewal has yielded rich dividends in terms of organisational processes and choices.

IDEOLOGY AND CHOICES

SIDH's commitment to its mission statement and ideology governs the choices it makes in selecting and undertaking projects. Instead of rushing in for projects with attractive funding, sponsorship, soft loans, etc., SIDH analyses the projects carefully along its preferred criteria, selects the ones which meet its standards and priorities, and opts out of others. For example, SIDH received an offer to implement a World Bank-funded project called Swajal which involved rural drinking water and sanitation. However a close scrutiny of the project revealed to SIDH that the non-negotiables of the project were designed in such a way as to provide much greater benefit to the more prosperous villages compared to the smaller, poorer villages. This was against SIDH's commitment to the principles of equity and fair play, and it went against Gandhiji's tenet that our decisions and actions should help the poorest of the poor. While SIDH appreciated that there should be minimal financial stakes of the beneficiaries, the project stipulation that every village must contribute 10% of the total cost was seen by SIDH as being unfair to the smaller villages because of the peculiar problems that the hilly terrain presented. In mountain areas, the remoter villages are also smaller, peripheral and more deprived of basic infrastructural amenities, income

generation opportunities, availability of cash, etc. than the larger villages which are often closer to the district centers, and because of their proximity to power centres, enjoy many more amenities and greater income generation opportunities. Since the fixed cost of bringing water to a village is primarily related to the remoteness of the village and the uneven terrain, when such cost is distributed to residents of small villages which by definition are in remote areas, the cost inevitably works out to be a lot more for the residents of smaller, poorer villages than for those residing in larger villages, though, the ostensibly fair principle of 10% contribution by village residents remains the same. SIDH contended that what appeared to be a fair deal was in fact loaded in favour of the larger, relatively prosperous villages. The net effect of the scheme would be that the smaller, remoter villages which needed the scheme benefits the most would, ironically enough, get left out due to the inability of their residents to meet the project's financial burden per family. Arguing that adequate supply of drinking water was a basic human need, and it was the responsibility of the state to provide the same, SIDH declined to be associated with the drinking water scheme which was seen as having been "designed to provide an unfair advantage to the relatively better off sections of society, thus striking at the very root of the goals of a welfare state."

This episode is a vivid illustration of how SIDH's ideology and commitment to values influences its choices and actions.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Consistent with its mission statement, SIDH's aim is Integrated Community Development towards Self Sustenance. Education is its major tool for attitudinal and socio-economic transformation. It's activities can broadly be grouped into the following areas;

- Education
- Community development

- Health & environment
- Appropriate technology & income generation

As SIDH grew over the years, gradually the number of programmes run by the society increased. An important core value maintained by SIDH in all its activities was never to force any programme on villagers. Instead, all programmes were demand-based. They evolved as villagers got more and more exposure to SIDH's activities and demanded programmes in other areas as well. Translating its mission statement into specific actions, SIDH has spread its wings to cover a variety of areas. In SIDH, education was seen as being the starting point of all economic and cultural growth as it opened the door to awareness about self, society, and environment. For community development, SIDH started women's programmes with assistance from Mahila Samakhya, Department of Education in the Ministry of HRD. SIDH's chief financier is SCF which provides financial assistance for various programmes that SIDH runs. SIDH-supported programmes now reach out to almost 27 villages of the Jaunpur block. Main activities and programmes are discussed below.

Education

SIDH runs five primary schools called "Hamari Pathshala" attended by 220 students covering almost 20 villages. Children up to class 5 from the five villages where SIDH runs its school, attend only SIDH run schools. These schools are run by adequately trained staff and supported by teaching aid developed by SIDH. Initially SIDH faced the problem of training its staff to perform multiple duties. This was partially solved when its promoters received a fellowship from SRUTI, Delhi and SAMTA, Chakrata offered stipend for the trainees.

The SIDH schools follow the U.P. Board curriculum. A unique feature of these schools is the insistence on incorporating into class discussions and student projects important issues such as village needs, environment, health, current

events, and general knowledge. SIDH has made a conscious effort to equip its teachers with knowledge and skills to ensure superior performance. SIDH runs for its teachers regular in-house training programmes to upgrade their knowledge- and skill-base continuously.

In July 1990 SIDH tried an ambitious plan to convert its primary schools into high schools. They had to abandon this effort for two reasons - first, they then needed to employ teachers from outside and that would have gone against their policy of evolving local resources and utilising them. Second, it would have meant more financial and work responsibility for existing staff that would lead to deterioration of the quality of work. SIDH's effort in education got a boost when the Local District Government granted recognition to its school, "Hamari Pathshala" at Bhediyan. Gradually SIDH was able to breakaway from the conventional teaching approach followed by the U.P. State Education Board. SIDH started following the practice of open book tests and giving grades rather than marks. This new evaluation technique proved to be effective in impacting the mindset of children and teachers. Smooth running of schools is ensured by village school committees which consist of 5 villagers who act as watchdogs. The committee meetings serve as a useful forum for enlisting the commitment of villagers to the school, and for giving feedback to teachers.

Village Schools: Working Towards a Model

Consolidating upon a decade's experience in rural education, SIDH believes that its experiments and experiences can be useful pointers towards a positive model for primary education, particularly in rural areas. These experiences cover teaching and learning from pre-primary level through the high school stage. SIDH's innovations and own learning have been in a variety of fields.

School timings: Class timings have been decided keeping in mind the ground realities of the family environment of boy and girl students in poor rural hilly

areas. Older children in families have house work to do in the morning, so they cannot attend school in the morning. Thus classes from KG to Class II are run from 9 am to 12 noon; and, for standard III to V are held from 12 noon to 3 pm. Students with family responsibilities and household work are allowed to go home early after attending the compulsory language and mathematics classes.

Developing local talent: All SIDH teachers are local youth who have studied upto class VIII. SIDH keeps organising capacity-building programmes for them. The focus of these programmes is on broadening their mindset and on upgrading their analytical and communication skills. Teachers are exposed to new ideas in a variety of disciplines including education, sociology, political science, spirituality, etc. They are encouraged to incorporate new ideas in their teaching and to experiment with innovative teaching methods in the classroom.

Children's magazine: A magazine called 'Apni Baat' is brought out to give children an outlet for self-expression and creativity. It carries contributions by children in the form of essays, poems, stories, drawings, etc. Each issue is around a theme selected either by children or by the senior SIDH staff. Children contribute enthusiastically to the magazine and look forward to the next issue to read what their friends have written. It helps hone their skills of creative self expression and helps them develop confidence. Sometimes Apni Baat provides to teachers and parents an insight into their own blindspots and biases. Special themes have included discrimination against the girl child in the family, children's complaints against the elders, children's aspirations for the future, etc.

School Committees: Various school committees such as cleanliness committee, arrangement committee, agriculture committee, cultural programme committee, and discipline committee are set up to develop in children initiative and leadership qualities. Committee members are elected by the children and the non performing members are recalled by the children and teachers jointly.

Committee members are given specific task responsibilities. These experiences help develop in children self confidence, a sense of responsibility and leadership qualities.

Peer teaching: Children with interest and initiative are encouraged to teach other, younger children. This helps them develop a spirit of learning from and teaching one another. It also helps build a more articulate and confident personality. The younger children learn to shed inhibition and seek help from their older friends

Bal Sabha (Open session): Everyday half an hour is kept as unstructured time for a session which belongs to children. All the school children get together and use the time for any constructive, creative activities they want to carry out in the class. All students take turn in conducting the open session. Bal Sabha has become an important outlet for children's self expression when they can tell stories, enact plays, conduct quizzes, give talks, etc. Children sometimes use this opportunity to give loosely-disguised feedback to their teachers about their inconsistencies. SIDH experience has shown that Bal Sabhas are helping children become more expressive, confident and assertive.

Unconventional Evaluation Methods: Dissatisfied with the traditional methods of evaluation which encourage rote memory, straight jacketed learning and unhealthy competition, SIDH has been experimenting with a variety of innovative techniques. To break the tendency of piecemeal, compartmentalised learning for different subjects, SIDH schools hold tests in three broad areas, namely languages, mathematics and general knowledge. Related disciplines are combined in each of these papers to test the integrated understanding of problems. Setting combined question papers is a growth experience for the teachers too. Oral examinations in general knowledge is held to set off undue emphasis on the written word and to give credit to students who have superior

oral communication skills. Open book tests are conducted to shift the emphasis from rote learning to understanding. Each student's monthly performance is plotted on a graph to indicate to him / her improvement or otherwise in one's grades. Thus academic performance is compared with one's past performance, and not with the performance of others. Hopefully this reduces the spirit of competition with others and encourages students to develop internal standards for superior performance.

Balwadi: Balwadi or pre-primary schools were started mainly to provide special attention to younger siblings of students attending primary school. The first balwadi was started in the same building as the SIDH school and was run after school timings. SIDH's teachers acted as Balwadi teachers as well. In 1990 four Balwadis were being run and the number increased to 12 by 1992 itself. Afterwards it was decided to consolidate and develop the existing teaching resources rather than to add to the number of Balwadis and increase the work load of the SIDH staff. The Balwadi emerged as a forum to influence young minds about the importance of clean environment, personal hygiene and sanitation. For this purpose SIDH developed its own teaching aids in the form of audio cassettes of Hindi songs containing themes like nature, neighbourhood, environment, etc. SIDH has prepared a book of environment songs and stories which it uses at its Balwadis and schools.

To train the Balwadi staff SIDH sent 10 volunteers from villages to Laxmi Ashram, Kausani. The Ashram was happy to come to the assistance of SIDH. These staff with special training proved valuable to Balwadis. Not only they helped in preparing cassettes containing prayers and songs about environment etc.; they helped in reopening of the two closed Balwadis. A positive fallout of the informal and flexible nature of instructional approach in Balwadis has been a high attraction and attendance rate for girls. Due to their shorter hours and a participant-friendly approach, Balwadis are seen as being a lot less demanding

and intimidating than schools, and even older girls feel encouraged to attend. Unlike in school, in Balwadis children are allowed to bring their younger siblings if required. This helps increase the attendance rate especially for girls. Once the families get used to their children attending ballads, the acceptance of the idea of subsequent school education becomes easier for children and their parents. To develop the involvement and ownership of the village, a supervisory committee consisting of village women monitors the functioning of Balwadis.

Balshala: SIDH found out from its experiences over the years that children who attended balwadis were less intimidated by the school environment later than those who did not attend. Therefore, as an experiment, balwadis in some villages were upgraded to "Balshalas" that catered to children up to the level of class-2. This led to a significant increase in the enrolment of girls and children from poorer families. Balshalas are often run by local village girls who have had education upto class V and are later given training by SIDH. With modest investment, Balwadis can be upgraded to Balshalas. SIDH views Balshalas as a cost-effective option to provide basic education to village children.

Non Formal Education (NFE): SIDH runs four NFE centres, two throughout the year and two for two months. These centres cater to the educational requirement of illiterate adults, school dropouts and older children who could not get a chance to attend school earlier. The SIDH NFE centre at Mussorie was the first centre where SIDH started NFE with the help from various fronts. It received financial support from Mahila Samakhya and technical support from Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi, Almora. This centre is also used as a laboratory for SIDH to try out, modify, and improve teaching methodologies and new material before it is disseminated to Hamari Pathshalas.

At present NFE centres run in Jaunpur area are a non-funded activity that the primary school teachers voluntarily conduct in the evening after regular classes

are over. An earlier workshop of teachers had revealed that the teachers did not perceive the Government schools curriculum to be sensitive to local culture or relevant to the local environment. Consequently SIDH got involved in developing a curriculum for non-formal education which will incorporate social issues, panchayat raj etc. For this purpose a professional was hired in 1997 with whose help a two-day workshop for teachers and curriculum designers was held to prepare a comprehensive curriculum.

The other initiative in bringing education to the door step of villages was the inception of circulating library in selected villages of Jaunpur in 1997. The objective of the scheme was to provide to the village children, youth and adults an easy access to a variety of reading material. Library functioning is monitored by a village committee elected or appointed by the villagers themselves. A supervisor oversees the smooth functioning of the library. Each village having a library opens a library account in the nearest bank branch where the library membership fees and other donations are deposited.

Community Participation

Mahila Dal / Mandal: SIDH worked towards organizing women from the start. Initially there were four Mahila dals run by SIDH. As the benefits of Mahila Dals became evident to nearby villages, the demand for Mahima Dals increased. Now 27 villages have mahila dals. Members of these dals meet monthly for discussion of their problems, review and feedback. Through collective action they were able to influence local authorities to repair broken water pipes and install three stand pumps. In April 1990 these groups were able to get a sanction of Rs. 6 lakhs for laying of fresh water pipelines. Members of these dals organise Mahila Mela regularly on International Women's Day which further reinforces their commitment to the group.

Mahila dal started a collective saving scheme. Each member contributed to fixed amount every month in the joint saving bank account for a predecided village facility. With these savings women of Bhediyan village were able to purchase a threshing machine. Sustainability of these dals initiated SIDH to add up a new programme "Women and Energy" in 1992 with the focus of introduction of efficient method of usages of fuel by using smokeless chulhas, solar cooker, etc. By 1997-98, SIDH had helped construct thirty biogas plants in different villages.

A significant change in the attitude of women was evident when a group of 10 women travelled to Delhi to participate in a 10 day long Balwadi Training Course for illiterate women conducted by Mobile Crèches. SIDH also runs a Sewing centre which has become fairly popular. Because of lack of trainers the programme shifts from one village to another after six months.

Of late Mahila Dals have been undertaking several activities aimed at awareness building: These include workshops to discuss and resolve women's issues such as exploitation at the macro level in the public domain, and suffering at the micro level in the personal domain; the power of Ushma, or love and caring which is innate to a woman's nature; women's rights to public and private spaces from the market domain to the family. Interestingly many times the issues raised in Mahila Dal workshops have spilled over and have led to men and women consciously examining their roles, responsibilities, and contribution in stoking or resolving these issues. Important issues such as gender sensitivity, violence against women, sexual harassment are discussed in mixed groups to develop action steps to combat these evils. Though nothing concrete has been achieved so far, a beginning has been made in drawing attention to social menaces which, though widespread, are usually treated as taboos, and even their 'undiscussability' remains undiscussable. SIDH believes working with youth to bring about attitudinal and social change. It wants to evolve and propagate an approach which is empowering both to men and women. Gender

equity acquires an added significance if it is treated, as done by SIDH, as an issue not only to reduce unjust treatment of women, but also as an approach to liberate men. SIDH conducts gender sensitivity workshops for the village youth, and representatives from other NGOs. These workshops are for mixed groups of women and men so that objectives of empowerment of women and sensitisation of men can be simultaneously addressed.

To develop an appreciation of women's perspective, members have been encouraged to identify the 'last' woman in their village and document her story. These stories are later analysed and discussed to understand the reasons for her state, and explore options for addressing her problems. Issues discussed in Mahila Dal include events like the birth of a daughter, domestic politics, living with in-laws, daughter's sickness, violence against women, etc. Besides awareness generation, Mahila Dals also celebrate outstanding acts of initiative, self-reliance and courage by women. Thus awards are given to young girls for saving the life of a woman in treacherous hilly terrain; they are given to a group of women for mobilising people to get a burnt-out transformer replaced to restore power supply to their village.

Health & Environment

Drinking Water: With the help of SIDH the collective effort of villagers turned out to be fruitful in addressing the problem of drinking water scarcity in the area. Not only Mahila dal secured sanction for water pipeline from the government, group of villagers were able to influence Jal Nigam Authority to restore water supply and to install a number of standpumps as well.

Sanitation: To bring about a change in the personal habits of villagers and make them aware about modern sanitation for disease prevention, soil enrichment and cleanliness of environment, SIDH initiated efforts to build toilets in villages. These toilets are built purely on the initiation and interest of villagers

and their contribution (labour and money). With help from Uttarakhand Sewa Nidhi, Sidh offered to build toilet for the family if they contributed by labouring to get it built for them. SIDH has created awareness among a large number of people about the importance of sanitation but changing personal habits will take more time.

Health / Hygiene / Environment Awareness

-SIDH's effort to make villagers aware about health and hygiene starts from incorporating these issues in the curriculum of balwadis. They arrange various other programmes, exhibitions, melas, film shows, puppet shows to address the issues of health and hygiene. Success of puppet shows encouraged SIDH to form it's own puppet team.

Technical & Income - Generation

Vocational Training Centre: Through its vocational training centre, SIDH provides training, design guidance in stitching, basket making, toy making and knitting. It opened an outlet near Kempty Falls to be able to provide a market to the products prepared by the trainees of the centre. SIDH has not been able to streamline the marketing because of the fluctuating nature of production. It aims to enable the vocational centre to develop into a full fledged income generation programme for the villagers.

Nursery: With the help from an NGO at Dehradun, SIDH started its nursery at Talgoti with a view to enrich cultivation of vegetables in the area. Their efforts were encouraged by HARC and they were able to establish a seed distribution centre at Kandi. They started receiving technical help from Dr. Mishra of Chakriya Vikaas Project (Bihar) to try out multilayered technique of agriculture. Since the technical collaboration with Dr. Mishra was short-lived, SIDH's efforts in this area did not bear fruit. Hence SIDH focused on developing a pilot farm on it's own based on simple agriculture techniques by involving AFPRO. By 1992

they started a second nursery and ventured into mushroom cultivation. Next year, to develop their expertise 3 teachers were sent for training in organic farming to Delhi with the help from AFPRO.

Technology: SIDH tried to develop appropriate technology to improve the quality of life of villagers. It developed a corn sheller which cuts down the shelling time to 1/10th of the usual time. SIDH also tried an ambitious plan to design a low cost, manually/animal-operated trolley system. This project however was not realised because of various constraints that they faced.

Capacity Building: Since its initial years, ongoing development of its staff has been a major preoccupation with SIDH. An important trigger for this comes from SIDH's policy to recruit only local villagers for all its educational initiatives. SIDH chose to develop local resources for two reasons. First, the development of local resources would contribute to the sustainability and enhanced effectiveness of the developmental efforts- teachers who belong to the same social reality as their students would be able to communicate, and understand the local cultural factors a lot better than outsiders. Second, local people with enhanced skills would hopefully be able to evoke aspirations for similar growth among others in their village and thus act as role models for others.

SIDH invests a lot of time and effort in staff development through various training programmes. Every year SIDH organizes a number of in-house training programmes on various topics of interest for its staff, making use of various organizations and individuals for the purpose. After adoption of a clear statement of mission, two concerns have been incorporated in its staff development effort. These include strengthening the ideological foundation of staff members, and improving their work skills to ensure superior work performance. For achieving the former, all SIDH members are required to undergo a ten-day course on Vipassana- a Buddhist meditation approach.

Additionally, ongoing discussions on topics pertaining to religion, culture, development ideologies, politics, history, etc., as well as nomination to relevant training programmes provide constant ideological stimulation to staff members. In order to upgrade the skill levels, refresher training programmes, workshops, discussion meetings are conducted by internal resources as well as by the guest faculty. SIDH team members frequently attend courses and workshops organised by other agencies and NGOs. SIDH also undertakes training and educational activities for other organisations which serve as growth experiences for its staff. Thus learning and self renewal appears to be a constant refrain in SIDH.

COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

The society started a monthly magazine RAIBAR (Message) in Hindi to serve as a mouthpiece of SIDH to communicate not only to local people but also to other social organizations in the area. Raibar is the platform from where SIDH disseminates information about different programmes run by it, occasional motivational incidences, topical information on usefulness of afforestation, discussions of local problems, vegetables to be grown in a particular area etc. Each issue of Raibar includes thought-provoking articles on various facets of social development and change.

SIDH has tried to construct a network between the other social organizations and itself so as to achieve better co-operation and effective implementation of programmes through collaboration. It is also developing a database about other NGOs in the region.

Additionally, SIDH believes that it is the role of an NGO to bring about fundamental change in the existing social order by raising awareness among different actors of the consequences of their actions, and by trying to influence the system. It therefore sees an important advocacy role for itself whereby it seeks to raise debates, highlights contradictions in the system between what, for

example, the education system professes to do and what it actually does. It has carried its advocacy role further to critically examine congruence between the ostensible objectives of development programs sponsored by international agencies and the *actual* impact of the programmes, and has often found and highlighted contradictions. Details of a world bank project Swajal mentioned in the earlier part of this report is an example of this role played by SIDH. It pursues the advocacy and networking roles by highlighting through newspaper articles the huge gaps between the stated aims of development programmes and their actual delivery. Its house magazine Raibar published in Hindi carries this debate further and makes it accessible to a large number of readers who have personal interest in such issues and can appreciate them in their own language.

SIDH networks with a number of like-minded organisations by forming linkages and relationships, supporting and participating in their activities as resource persons working together towards evolving alternatives to the current model of socio-economic development. It also associates with people's movements like the Swadhyaya movement which shares SIDH's ideology and has spread to more than one lakh villages across different states in India.

SIDH - PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

Analyzing the progress of SIDH in the last decade, the conclusion is inevitable that it has come a long way. From a handful of people who were trying to figure out how best to help the rural poor in the Jaunpur block of Tehri Garhwal district in Uttar Pradesh, to an organisation with a clear mission statement, a thoughtfully-developed structure, well-defined policies, conscious networking with other relevant organisations, SIDH comes across as a professionally-managed NGO which has already made considerable impact in the region.

It commands direct and indirect influence on a large number of people. Direct influence is exercised over those people who participate directly in a variety of SIDH's activities and programmes. With its well-received educational

programmes (including primary schools, balwadis, balshalas), numerous women and youth programmes including Yuvak Dals (village youth groups), Jyoti Manch (a forum for all women team members who run balwadis or teach in the SIDH primary school), Yuvati Dals (groups of young women who have been given technical training in skills such as maintenance and repairs of stoves, pressure cookers, simple electrical appliances, plumbing, tailoring, and knitting), Mahila Dals, etc., SIDH is making a visible difference in the lives of rural poor in the Jaunpur block. Through its direct, interactive approach, SIDH is ushering in change in people's attitudes, knowledge levels, and skills, and the reach of SIDH spreads from pre-school children to young students, adults and older people in the non-formal education sector. The major impact has been in awareness-creation and capacity building. Direct beneficiaries have been not only the male and female programme participants of different age groups in its various programmes, but also the teachers, staff members and programme resource persons who have been helped to acquire the capability and confidence to impart education and thus help others grow.

However, SIDH's impact extends much beyond its immediate staff members, students, and programme participants which group itself covers substantial numbers. The impact of its indirect approach is a lot more far-reaching. Because of its communication, advocacy, and networking roles, SIDH reaches out to help broaden the thinking and attitudes of a large number of people who read Raibar, its monthly journal and a number of newspapers in which SIDH staff publish their thought-provoking articles, and all those who are touched by its advocacy role in a variety of forums and outlets.

Its innovative educational efforts have received a fair amount of recognition. SIDH's educational programme was recognised as one of the ten innovative programmes in the country by the MS Swaminathan Foundation and Agha Khan Foundation. Its flexi-time approach for different classes has been adopted by the

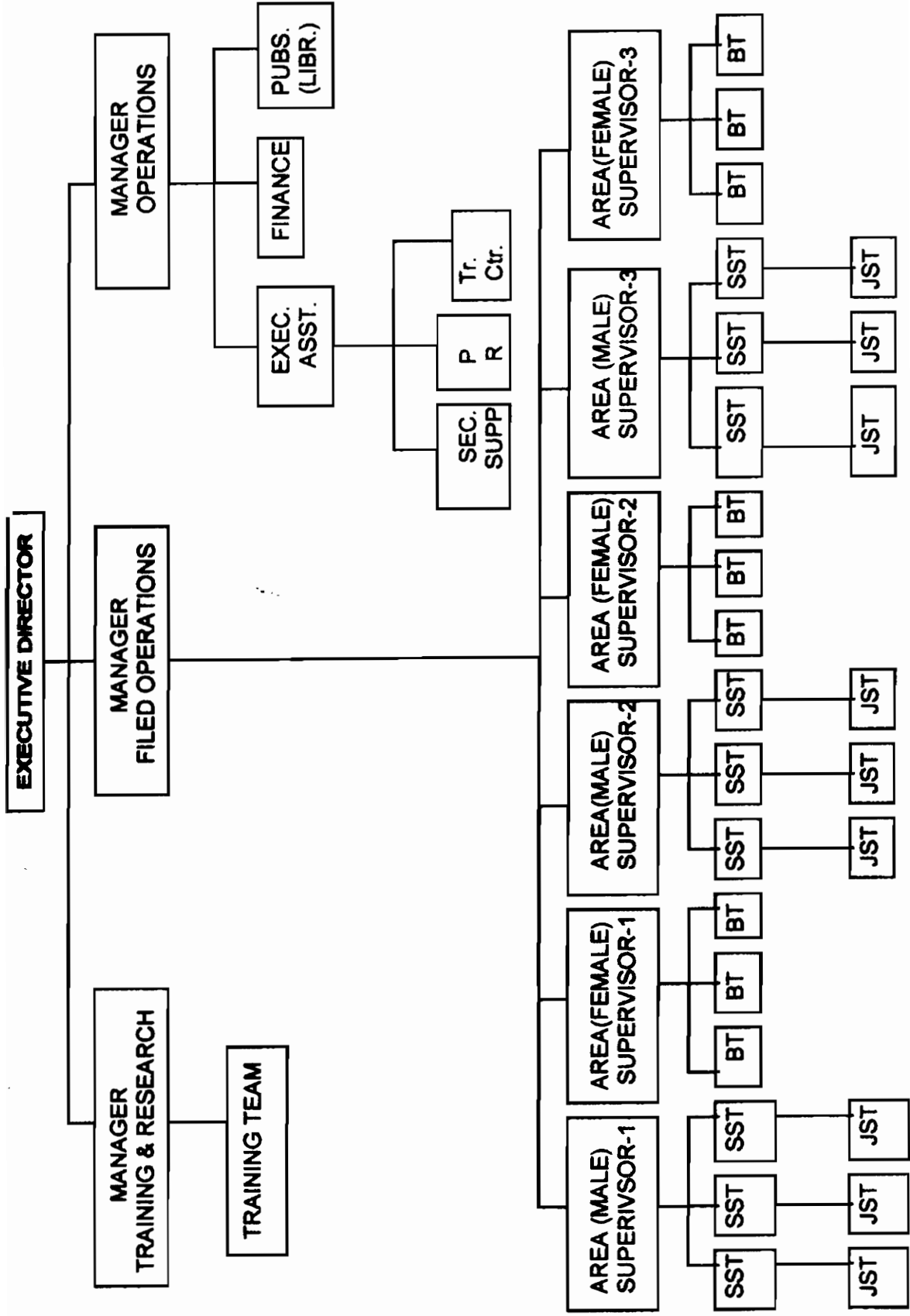
District Education Programme. SIDH's approach to multi-grade teaching has been documented by the NCERT. Thus the documentation, dissemination and adoption of many of its innovations is a strong indication of the influence SIDH exercises in its chosen domain of education.

Of late, SIDH has started taking the initiative to organise thought-provoking seminars which serve as rallying points for notable thinkers in a variety of social change-related disciplines to meet and exchange ideas on evolving alternatives to the present socio-political system. The objective of these seminars is a joint exploration of the current state of our nationhood and brainstorming about alternative, more efficacious models of development. SIDH is thus taking a lead of sorts in creating such opportunities for intellectual discourse aimed at challenging the status quo in the field of development.

Thus both quantitatively and qualitatively, SIDH has made considerable strides in its chosen field. It has been able to do so because of its sustained commitment to rural development and human well-being through education. A major strength of this social change organisation has been its own willingness for change and self-renewal. SIDH's commitment to self-learning and growth is manifest in its eternal readiness to seek expert inputs for its concerns, be they structural, systemic, culture-building, or operational, including latest educational innovations and initiatives, and try to modify its own outlook and practices accordingly. It is a refreshing experience to interact with an NGO which is relatively free of dogmas and rigidities, and appears to be forever open to learning. This urge for learning manifests itself in a constant endeavour of the organisation to expose its members to new and unfamiliar experiences through seminars, workshops, training programs, discourses, dialogues and discussions. People are encouraged to be innovative, try out new ideas, take risks and experiment with the unknown. SIDH commands a reputation for fostering innovations in a number of its educational programmes. The fact that SIDH

initiated a number of novel projects some of which had to be abandoned is indicative of the innovative predisposition of the organisation whereby many new ideas reach fruition, but some new, creative ideas also get discarded on the way. The organisation sometimes carries out candid exercises in self-reflection to assess where it is and where it wants to go. It seems to have an unusual degree of openness and interest in understanding its own internal processes so as to figure out areas warranting change and improvement.

In sum, our understanding of SIDH, as presented in this report suggests it to be akin to a learning organisation in the social development field which is keen to analyse its past and present continually so as to change and create a better future. Peter Senge defines a learning organisation as "a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it." In our assessment SIDH appears to come pretty close to this definition. However, in the midst of its fluidity and urge for change, there have to be certain anchors which provide stability and sense of direction. It is hoped that SIDH's mission and certain core values would serve as such anchors.



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