

ASK
EVALUATION, RESEARCH
AND DOCUMENTATION
UNIT
Profile



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Association for Stimulating Know how (ASK) established in 1992, is a non-profit organization committed to the cause of socio-economic development for the marginalized sections of the society. ASK has chosen to fulfil a catalytic role in stimulating the process of development with a focus on promoting the self-help ethic:

Evaluation, Research & Documentation Unit: ASK has laid substantial emphasis on need for conducting research, participatory monitoring, evaluations, institutional assessments etc. of development initiatives by NGOs. These exercises facilitate in assessing the results achieved, process of development undertaken, utilization of resources and the levels of capacity with a view to draw learnings and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. ASK has extensively conducted the exercises for international agencies, national level, intermediary level and grassroots NGOs.

The core competencies of the unit include undertaking the following:

- ◆ Institutional Assessments: CBOs & NGOs
- ◆ Participatory Need Assessment
- ◆ Participatory evaluations
- ◆ Monitoring & Pre-funding appraisals
- ◆ Preparation of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems
- ◆ Gender Analysis
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Documentation

Unit Resources: The unit comprises of 3 members who are from a social science background each having good understanding of the development sector. The team is equipped with both the desired skills and knowledge to undertake the various activities of the unit. The documentation, analytical and communication skills of the team are an asset to the unit. The team members are also well versed with the usage of Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Process Adopted

Planning Phase, which involves understanding the issue/, project, delineating the objectives, identification of stakeholders, preparation of tools and methods.

Implementation Phase where the exercise is conducted and findings are made at the institutional level and the target community level. Simultaneous sharing of findings is also done with the concerned agency for cross verifications throughout the process so as to evolve an agreement by the end rather than pass a verdict.

Documentation Phase involves the preparation of a report bringing to focus the findings and recommendations.

Final Presentation of report to the concerned agency, followed by necessary discussion and its finalization.

Methods & Tools used

- ◆ *Participatory appraisal methods*
- ◆ *Process Evaluation Research Technique (PERT)*
- ◆ *SWOT Analysis*
- ◆ *Focus group discussion*
- ◆ *Individual interviews*
- ◆ *Rating & Ranking*
- ◆ *Perception gauging exercises*
- ◆ *Photo language*
- ◆ *Document review and record screening*

PARTICIPATORY INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Participatory Institutional Assessment is a process which helps to reveal the different dimensions and crucial components of the institutions of which assessment is significant to enable the institution / organization to mature and sustain itself. PIA helps in identifying institution's strengths and limitations and eventually improving its institutional capacities in terms of both structural and functional aspects.

Assessment of an institution includes analysis of following aspects:

- ◆ Identity and image
- ◆ Clarity of focus in terms of vision, mission and purpose
- ◆ Programmes - their appropriateness and delivery
- ◆ Awareness and involvement of various stakeholders
- ◆ Clarity of organizational structure and roles and their effective performance
- ◆ Administrative & Financial systems
- ◆ Capacities and mechanisms for their development
- ◆ Organizational culture
- ◆ Lateral Linkages
- ◆ Gender sensitivity within the organization and its programmes
- ◆ Sustainability

Institutional assessment of the following institutions has been facilitated for:

NGOs

- ◆ Purvanchal Grameen Chetana Samiti, Raghapur, Balia (Varanasi Diocese)
- ◆ Social Work Center of Arch diocese of Agra
- ◆ Support for Sustainable Society, Ranchi
- ◆ AIDA, Dimapur, Nagaland
- ◆ Shramik Bharti, Kanpur
- ◆ Arpana Trust, Gajnoi, Himachal Pradesh
- ◆ Lok Jagriti Kendra, Madhupur, Jharkhand
- ◆ UYRDC, Uttaranchal
- ◆ PRA Resource Center of SPEECH, Madurai
- ◆ BOSCO Reach Out, Assam
- ◆ 6 partner NGOs of CORDAID in Jharkhand and Bihar
- ◆ Caritas, Nepal

CBOs

- ◆ Water users Association in Orissa
- ◆ Primary Farm Forestry Cooperatives formed by IFFDC in UP, MP
- ◆ Village Durbars and Panchayats in Meghalaya and Assam
- ◆ Village development Trusts and their federations promoted by Indo Canadian Agricultural Extension Project, U.P.
- ◆ Mahila Mandals and SHGs of several organizations

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATIONS

ASK conducts both participatory mid-term and end line evaluations involving all major stakeholders viz. Institution's leadership, functionaries, beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and agencies linked with. Perceptions from all these enable to ascertain the accomplishments, non-accomplishments and the overall impact of the development intervention. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects are assessed.

Simultaneously along with the participants the evaluation team works out realistic and feasible corrective strategies for inducing necessary changes and improvements in the development programme.

The issues on which evaluations have been conducted are as follows:

- ◆ Integrated Land Development
- ◆ Water Resource Development
- ◆ Participatory Irrigation Management
- ◆ Empowerment of Women
- ◆ Micro credit and Micro enterprise development
- ◆ Strengthening cluster level federations
- ◆ Non-formal education
- ◆ Empowerment of Girl child
- ◆ Child labour
- ◆ Good Governance
- ◆ Low cost Housing
- ◆ Dairy Cooperatives development
- ◆ Women participation in Watershed Management
- ◆ Animation of rural poor.

PARTICIPATORY NEED ASSESSMENTS

ASK specializes in conducting Participatory Need Assessments by eliciting perceptions and opinions from various stakeholders including the target group. This exercise facilitates in identification of actual needs of the community / target group and also those spheres of their lives where support of an external agency is required to make a holistic and realistic intervention. Some of the major Participatory Need Assessments, which have been carried out, are for:

- ◆ Widows of Vrindavan
- ◆ Badua Tapu community in Banka district of Bihar
- ◆ Child labourers in brass industry of Moradabad, UP and in leather industry in Agra, U.P.
- ◆ Mothers of children working in brass industry of Moradabad, UP
- ◆ Credit needs identification

ASK believes that for holistic understanding of an issue or area both qualitative and quantitative data are required. Both information are strengthened when used in conjunction with one another. Thus baseline surveys and PRA are complementary to each other. A survey tool is devised and similarly PRA techniques are selected on the basis of the objectives of the assignment. Facilitation for designing and conducting baseline surveys and PRA has been for following issues:

- ◆ Health
- ◆ Drought situation
- ◆ Assessment of Poverty
- ◆ Problems of old age
- ◆ Assessment of Income generation skills
- ◆ Status of women
- ◆ Credit need identification
- ◆ Land and Water use
- ◆ Watershed Development
- ◆ Problems of adolescent girls

Besides PRA techniques are widely used in Participatory Evaluations and during Strategic Planning for NGOs

MONITORING & PRE- FUNDING APPRAISALS

ASK believes that Monitoring leads to greater degree of awareness of results and constant improvement through efficient and effective use of resources; and ultimately in fostering the sense of responsibility amongst the people. For effective monitoring a system must be built into the programme design and management plan, and should provide continuous feedback on an on going basis. More significantly, it must actively involve the implementers as well as programme participants in measuring, recording, collecting, processing and analyzing information. The role of the outside facilitator should be not only to carry out periodic monitoring exercise but also facilitate the evolving of need based systems and change of strategy for effective programme implementation. This necessitates that the system be need based and simple, and keeping in view the ability of programme participants to use it.

In this context ASK has carried out the following assignments:

(i) Pre-funding and Monitoring support to CFLI

ASK has provided ongoing support to Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), a program of Canadian High Commission for supporting local initiative of NGOs. Under this ASK has conducted pre-funding assessments and monitoring of several NGOs throughout the country on behalf of CFLI.

(ii) Gender Equity Fund (GEF)

GEF a project of CIDA works with a focus approach of providing financial support to NGOs working on Gender issues. Women development and empowerment are the key programmes supported by GEF. ASK worked as part of the team to conduct field visits to the agencies supported by GEF for documenting their efforts and to draw the major learnings which serve as the basis to plan the priorities and approaches of next phase of GEF.

(iii) Aus Aid

An assignment was conducted for shortlisting projects of NGOs for prospective funding by AusAid.

(iv) Caritas Denmark

Pre-funding appraisal of "Organic Agriculture Project" which has been proposed by DSSS, Archdiocese of Imphal to Caritas Denmark.

**PREPARATION OF MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS /
PLANS / MANUALS & OTHER INSTRUMENTS**

Monitoring and evaluation systems / plans / manuals, instruments have been developed for:

- ◆ Asian Development Bank (ADB), Manila
- ◆ Revolving credit programme managed by Apex organizations of farmers under the Indo Canadian Agricultural Extension Project, U.P.
- ◆ Assessing functioning of Water Users Association formed by RAJAD. Also developed other instruments viz. Byelaws and MoU of Water Users' Associations, and the Water Management Policy.
- ◆ In built Monitoring system for IFFDC and EIRA adopting a bottom to top approach.
- ◆ Bosco Reach Out - Self Help Groups Program.
- ◆ Gender and Development project Uttar Kshetriya Samaj Vikas Kendra, supported by MISEREOR, Germany
- ◆ Arpana Trust, Karnal

RESEARCH

Research is another core area of ASK. Research is conducted on social issues as well as issues of corporate social responsibility. Researches being conducted are action-oriented with a focus on indepth study of both secondary and primary data. Further both the qualitative and quantitative aspects are included in the research. ASK has conducted following researches:

- ◆ Research on Social Dimensions of Business Practice is aimed at determining the social dimensions of business practices in the town Moradabad, in association with Resource Center of International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). The research focuses on ascertaining the impact of brassware business practices on the socio-economic conditions of the workers and the general community. Another important aspect of this research is the dissemination of research findings amongst the corporate and social sectors including the various stakeholders.
- Research on “NGO-Government Partnerships in the area of Health” ” with IIM, Bangalore. Since August, 03 ASK has been involved in doing a research with IIM, Bangalore. The national level study being guided by Prof. Gita Sen from IIM, Bangalore seeks to document the experience of NGOs from the different states in India, in engaging with the government. Many NGOs not only have enormous experience over decades in interacting with government, but also valuable perspectives on this issue. It is an endeavour to get a more comprehensive picture of these perspectives on NGO-Government interactions. The research will be useful for all the stakeholders in the development and health arena. It can be a tool for understanding the government better, for relooking at organizational strategies, for identifying and lobbying concerns at a national level etc.

STUDIES

Good Governance Study in North east India

Conducted a study on good governance in the states of Meghalaya and Assam for Bosco Reach Out an NGO based in northeast. The study was conducted to understand grassroots governance systems among various tribes and find out the scopes for future intervention. The study also focused to understand the government systems and its linkages with grassroots institutions.

Study on Strategies to improve Cataract Surgical coverage in Haryana for London School of Tropical Medicine & AIIMS.

Conducted PRA in the villages of Haryana to ascertain the level of accessibility to Cataract treatments and also ascertain the hindering factors. The study also included a gender component especially to determine the access and control of rural women on these services and to look into the factors which prevent them. It further included seeking the perceptions of the various stakeholders in this regard.

Study on identification of alternate sustainable employment opportunities for the beedi workers in Tamil Nadu

Conducted a study to identify alternate sustainable employment opportunities for the beedi workers in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, for Working Women's Form (WWF) India. WWF in partnership with International Labour Organisation (ILO) is implementing a pilot programme for the economic diversification and training on alternate income generating opportunities for these women beedi workers. One of the pre requisites to achieve this mission was a baseline study on the available income opportunities. An intensive study was carried out where interactions were held with several relevant informants which enabled in the identification of feasible activities.

Study for identification of viable Micro enterprises in the districts of Mau and Ballia for PGCS, Varanasi

In this study done by ASK and PGCS together the micro-enterprises were studied in the context of raw material and investment needed, requisites, manpower requirement, market details, income and returns, risks and problems. The identified micro-enterprises were categorized as: Land Based Enterprises and Non-Land Based Enterprises which have been further classified into Service, Manufacturing and Processing and Trading. An important component of the study was to explore possibilities of assistance to the target community initiating these enterprises from other institutions both, GOs, and NGOs in the form of monetary support, training, research, demonstration. Another major feature in this study was to ascertain the feasibility of the identified micro enterprises from the gender point of view. Since women would also constitute the target groups it was imperative to understand the existing gender scenario in the region, identify any gender issue if any, and identify enterprises, which women could also undertake. The study also included looking into other issues related to group dynamics, caste that could have a bearing on the sustainability aspects of the micro enterprises.

GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis helps in determining the potential, division of roles and responsibilities as well as the overall status of women vis-à-vis men in a given society / community. Further it enables to recognize the constraints on women and also the underlying factors. Perceptions of both women and men are integrated in conducting the analysis.

ASK has conducted both:

- ◆ **Generic gender analysis** i.e. understanding the overall status of women in terms of access & control over human and material resources, decision making, mobility, roles & responsibilities etc.
- ◆ **Specific gender analysis** on issues such as:
 - Women participation in local systems of Governance in Jaipur district, Rajasthan
 - Women participation in economic activities in Moradabad, Ballia, UP.
 - Problems of widows

DOCUMENTATION

ASK has the desired expertise and experience in the field of documentation.

Process Documentation: ASK understands this as a facilitating approach for ascertaining “How” and “Why” of continuous happenings. Process Documentation creates an opportunity of reflecting upon and analyzing the happenings and documenting the major learnings and insights for future planning. ASK has facilitated the same for:

- ◆ Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC) in Sultanpur, U.P and Udaipur, Rajasthan
- ◆ WID initiative of ASK at Moradabad
- ◆ Phase in strategy adopted by Deepalaya in slums of Delhi.
- ◆ Rajasthan Bal Kalyan Samiti, Udaipur

ASK is also involved in facilitating:

- ◆ **Formulation of Projects & developing proposals**
- ◆ **Developing Concept & Strategy papers**
- ◆ **Formulation of Strategic Plan & Project Implementation Plan for NGOs**

ASK Unit on Evaluation & Documentation unit has worked with:

International agencies

Asian Development Bank, Manila
AusAid
CORDAID, Netherlands
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),
CCF, New Zealand
Canadian Cooperation Association
DESWOS, Germany
International Business Leaders Forum, UK
India –Canada Cooperation Office, India
Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)
India Canada Environment Facility
PARTNERS in Rural Development, Canada
Pentland
Swedish International Development Agency
Caritas, Denmark
Caritas Nepal
National agencies

Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd. (IFFCO)
Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, India
HELPAGE India
Action Aid
WWF - Traffic Project
Deepalaya
Indo- German Bilateral Project

NGOs/ Dev. Projects

Arpana Charitable Trust & Research Center, Karnal, Haryana
AIDA, Dimapur, Nagaland
Mukti Niketan, Bihar
Archdiocese of Agra, Agra
Purvanchal Grameen Chetna Samiti, Varanasi
Purvanchal Grameen Sewa Samiti, Gorakhpur
Bosco Reach Out, Guwahati
Edamon Social Services Society, Kerela
Center for Rural Development and Consultants, Jaipur
UYRDC, Uttaranchal
Society for Sustainable development, Ranchi
Lok Jagriti Kendra, Jharkhand
UPVAN, Uttar Pradesh

Some of the Evaluation done in 2003-2004

s.NO	Evalautions conducted	Agency
1.	Project formulation	PGCS
2.	BRO Micro credit evaluation	BRO
3.	Caritas Bangladesh DEEDS project	Caritas Bangladesh
4.	Jirsong Asong Agriculture program	Caritas Denmark
5.	PGCS Market study	PGCS
6.	DSSS, Imphal: End line evaluation Pre-funding Appraisal	Caritas Denmark
7.	Capacity building Project in Bihar Jharkhand	CORDAID
8.	IIM Study	IIM Bangalore
9.	ICCO NRM study in Jharkhand	ICCO
10.	Tezpur Program evaluation	Caritas Denmark
11.	Arpana Evaluation in HP	Arpana
12.	UPVAN Network Evaluation	CORDAID & UPVAN
13.	Caritas Nepal Institutional assessment	Caritas Nepal
14.	BRO program evaluation	Caritas Denmark

SOME NEW ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNIT:

New associations have been established with these agencies for evaluations, pre-appraisals and studies:

- Caritas Denmark
- IIM, Bangalore
- Railway Children, UK
- Terres des homes, India