

CNI-SBSS

The Synodical Board of Social Services (SBSS) - justice and development wing of the Church of North India (CNI), has ventured into the 30th year of its journey *building communities of resistance and hope*. SBSS functions as a middle-level resource-sharing partner for 24 Diocesan Board of Social Services (DBSS) (presently with 20) across the nation except four south-Indian states. The SBSS headquarter is at New Delhi while the four resource centres for Social Actions (RCSAs) are strategically based at Agra, Kolkata, Pune and Ranchi.

The Political Theology

The development, CNI SBSS is concerned about, is centred on the creative and redemptive purpose of the God Almighty for all the humankind where people can live in peace and righteousness with each other and rest of the creations. This not only rejects the view from the top that sees human beings as passive and imperative receptacles fulfilling the consumer need but promotes the 'view from below' where the economic nature of human beings is a part of their wider existential dimensions. It involves a vision of an alternative society of counter culture i.e. a *Church for Resistance and Hope* where all participate in the ongoing salvation history of the Old and the New Testaments. Such a collective participation towards a realization of full human potential, the Kingdom of God (KoG), *ipso-facto* postulates a stand against social discrimination, powerlessness and material disadvantage. This vision of development gives a clear agenda for freeing the human potential from all that inhibits, deprives and enslaves the entire mankind.

Development of Project Proposals

In order to prepare an appropriate proposal (pointing out relevant guidelines), the first step SBSS is taking is developing a concept note and that provides a basic project outline that will be useful to crystallize the project concept as well as define the process and steps for the project planning

Background of the last Three Decades

The development journey of CNI SBSS commences from 1970s when it worked with *CNI related institutions* like GASS Memorial Centre, Socio-Economic Development Programme (SEDP) etc with the support of Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development - EZE (*Evangelische Zentralstelle Fur Entwicklungsbilfe* – presently known as EED). CNI SBSS was a partner of the tripartite arrangement and worked in the institutional model.

During 1978-1987, the approach of SBSS was changed to *community approach from institutional*. SBSS was given a mandate in 1978's historical consultation held at Calcutta as a response to the Church on the whole question of poverty and social justice for the poor and exploited. Being relevant to the changing times, SBSS further adopted *people-centred community based approach*. With this approach the implementing partners – DBSS were focussed on people-centred approach whereas SBSS started functioning as a coordinating agency facilitating institutional support to the DBSS and dioceses. Between 1988-2000, SBSS shifted its approach from social welfare to social action, In this phase SBSS had important events such as THUM (towards Holistic understanding of mission) and two-years capacity building programme.

Towards a Change Process

In 2003, SBSS completed its 25 years of journeying with the community. It was a jubilee/ festive event. During this period SBSS underwent review and external evaluation process, reviewing and retrospecting the 25 years of journeying with the people. Both the processes suggested a course of correction to revisit its mission and vision. Taking this process as an opportunity to bring in change, SBSS embarked on an interim phase of 16 months mainly for organizational development (OD).

The OD process helped SBSS to revisit and develop its new vision and mission and also to develop a decade long perspective. As per the perspective plan, SBSS took a shift from having a general intervention to be more issue specific and thematic. The focus was to streamline its programmatic interventions and highlight 3 issues viz. livelihood and food security, land rights and tribal and dalits exclusion with a thematic priority of gender mainstreaming, people-centred advocacy, lobbying and

networking and Church mission engagement. Towards being more issue specific, it was important for SBSS to change its way of sensitizing at the village level. Therefore, it shifted from the basic model of focussing on *village community* to form *community based organization* (CBOs) and CBOs to *people's organization* (PO) and PO to *people's movement* (PM) was envisaged. It was important to change SBSS' organizational perspective too and thus the concept of resource centres emerged replacing the zonal offices. SBSS' role turned into a data processor and resource sharer. In order to strengthen its financial and programmatic system, SBSS introduced the Cost Reimbursement Model, DataBase and web-based PME system PARAM (Programme Activity Review Accompaniment Model). Keeping abreast with the organisational memory and strengthening the knowledge management of SBSS, a strong, multifaceted development communications desk with strong research base capable of developing a strong MIS and web-based communication was also developed.

Defining the Planning Process for CNI SBSS

For SBSS, planning has to be based on the 10 years perspective plan - "Resistance and Hope". The forthcoming 3 years plan of SBSS is actually the 2nd phase of the decade long perspective. Its time to reflect on the first phase, checking on the lessons learnt, measuring and gauging the steps to be taken in the coming phase, and as how the evaluation recommendations shall be incorporated in the plan accordingly...

At DBSS level, the main objective of coming 3 years' project-phase is to strengthen the People's Organizations that are already developed in most of the reference areas and move towards stronger people's movement in the forms of federation, cooperatives or collective forums. This phase also emphasises on strengthening the organizational process from SBSS to DBSS which means focus would be more on carrying forward the organizational development process to the 4 RCSAs and down to the DBSSs. Therefore, strengthening the systems of planning, implementation, monitoring, communicating and reporting of the RCSAs and DBSS would draw greater attention.

SBSS will give more emphasis on legal and policy advocacy along with campaigns based on research and studies.

RCSAs on the other hand, might put emphasis on strengthening its state level advocacy initiatives, whereby it is expected to evolve as an autonomous organization, developing and testing with its contextual theology and mission praxis.

Steps in Planning

Step 1: Discussing and incorporating evaluation findings and suggestions

At CNI SBSS, while setting up a new proposal or a project phase, the organization goes through a review / evaluation process to ascertain its feasibility to contribute to the CNI-SBSS' goals and objectives at different levels. The external evaluation at the end of the project phases 2005-2008 would help the organization with important suggestions for the course of corrections to strengthen and move forward.

The planning for the 3 years project proposal will be based on the recommendations and feed back of the evaluation. Evaluation is already underway in all the DBSS either by the external team or by the SBSS team. The evaluation is based on the TOR prepared by the SBSS. The suggested methodology adopted for the evaluation can be interview of the different stake holders (DBSS governing board, staff, and representatives of the community) focus group discussion and field visit. Each DBSS has to develop its evaluation report which needs to be submitted and the recommendations of the evaluation need to be shared with the governing body.

Step 2: Participatory planning process

The evaluation of each DBSS should be followed by participatory planning process. The most important step for the planning in SBSS is to upgrade the database¹. As this planning is a continuation of the decade

¹ Database: the planning has to aim at bridging the gap between the existing situation and the ideal situation which can be derived from the authentic information that comes out from the analysis of the data collected. Almost all the DBSS has developed their database in 2006-07 and every month the DBSS is expected to upgrade it. In order to strengthen the transparent functioning SBSS has also made the Database available on their website - <http://www.cnisbss.org/Database-RC.asp>

long process, we need to take a stock assessing the major outcome of all the issues we have undertaken in the last 3 years for example if we are working on the issue of food security then to what extent we have ensured the food security at the community level, how much resources we have tapped, to what extent we have made the govt.'s Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) more regulatory and functional. In other words it is very important for us to identify the issues for which we need to work as per the present context and future trends.

As per the decade long perspective, our identification of issues has to be based on the focus areas that we are working (livelihood & food security, land rights, identity & exclusion of tribal and dalits) with thematic intervention on advocacy – networking and lobbying, mainstreaming gender sensitivity and Church mission engagement. For the last 3 years, SBSS is involved with seven DBSS which have been engaged in the local capacity for peace programme (LCP). For these particular DBSS, the planning can be initiated with the LCP framework on “Do No Harm” model.

While working for the last couple of years at the community, some important issues have cropped up which are closely related to the issue of livelihood and food security and SBSS/DBSS had started laying some sort of foundation on it. Therefore with the forthcoming plan we are also thinking of focusing on the issues of human trafficking and climate change, and water² and link it with the issue of livelihood and food security, identity and land. For new evolving issues it is very important for the SBSS and DBSS to gather evidences, facts and cases and then develop a plan based on the overall perspective.

Step 3: Preparing Guidelines

For SBSS, certain basic approach need to be kept into account for the planning like - planning has to be based on the Rights-based Approach (RBA)³, while addressing any issue, there should not be any single event but each event should have a follow-up and it should be under a campaign mode following the Analysis, Assistance Advocacy and Action structure.

Step 4: Planning process at various levels

The planning process of SBSS ideologically subscribes to facilitate community-based participatory planning process. The perspective plan, which reinforces SBSS programme interventions, structure, approach and roles, will be considered the base of the project plan. The methodology adopted for the plan will be as follows :

- Discussion and sharing on the concept note at SBSS and DBSS level, refining as well as internalizing it.
- Orientation on planning by the planning team⁴ with the DBSS
- Group process at the field level
- Meeting at village, cluster and area level on perspective development and problem analysis (FGDs)
- Village profile and survey records from the database
- Group process at the DBSS level with the DBSS staff for crystallizing and refining it.

The major stakeholders in the process of the forthcoming planning will be the people in communities. Special attention would be given to the women (both dalits and tribal) children and the congregations seeking their active involvement in the planning process.

As a whole, the planning process would also give special attention to emerging peoples' organization/ pressure-groups and women's groups through different meetings held in village, cluster and area committees. The DBSS board and local pastors will be actively involved in the planning process and their participation shall be sought in some of the community meetings. The plan evolved from the reference community will be shaped up in each DBSS. A framework for analysis of DBSS proposal based

² For new issues please refer to the concept notes

³ CNI SBSS has already developed a note on RBA, please refer to it as the document gives a clear understanding about the type of programme it needs to accommodate. For SBSS, RBA is based on four'A's i.e. - analysis, assistance, advocacy and action in identifying the problem and taking it as an issue towards building a movement.

⁴ The planning team will be a mix team of inter-SBSS team members. We can also have experts and activists from the field.

on the RBA and campaign mode will be evolved collectively. Subsequently the community plans will be compiled for the final preparation of the proposal.

As SBSS strongly believes in process-oriented development interventions, an utmost care shall be taken to maintain dynamism and flexibility in the process.

Time frame

- Evaluation in all the DBSS (external/ internal) – 15th Jan to 10th Feb
- Report of evaluation 15th -20th Feb
- Upgrading DataBase in Jan & Feb (Analysing the database so that the respective RCSAs and DBSS can upgrade it which may help us to carry out planning process in a better way)
- Planning process in Villages/ POs/CBOs - 20th Feb to March 15th
- Planning Meeting at the DBSS Feb 15th to 30th (SBSS Staff needs to accompany the DBSS at this time)
- Board Meeting at DBSS – 30th March to 7th April
- Submission of Plan to the SBSS- 15th April
- Compilation of Plan 15April to 15th May
- Submitting Plan to Ecumenical Resource Sharing Agency (ERSA) on 25th May 2008