

RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES NETWORK

The Three Tier Social Mobilisation of RSPs

An introductory Note

1. Context, Rational and Objectives

The Three Tier model of RSPs' Social Mobilisation consists of a structure where male and female COs are federated at the village-level into a Village Organization (VO), which are then further federated at the union council level to form the LSO. By federating community-level organizations, their comprehensive structures of VOs and LSOs are formed which make it possible for rural communities to mobilize their villages as well as the poor families in the whole union council for their own development.

The need for federating COs into VDOs and LSOs was particularly felt in the recent years due to the following reasons:

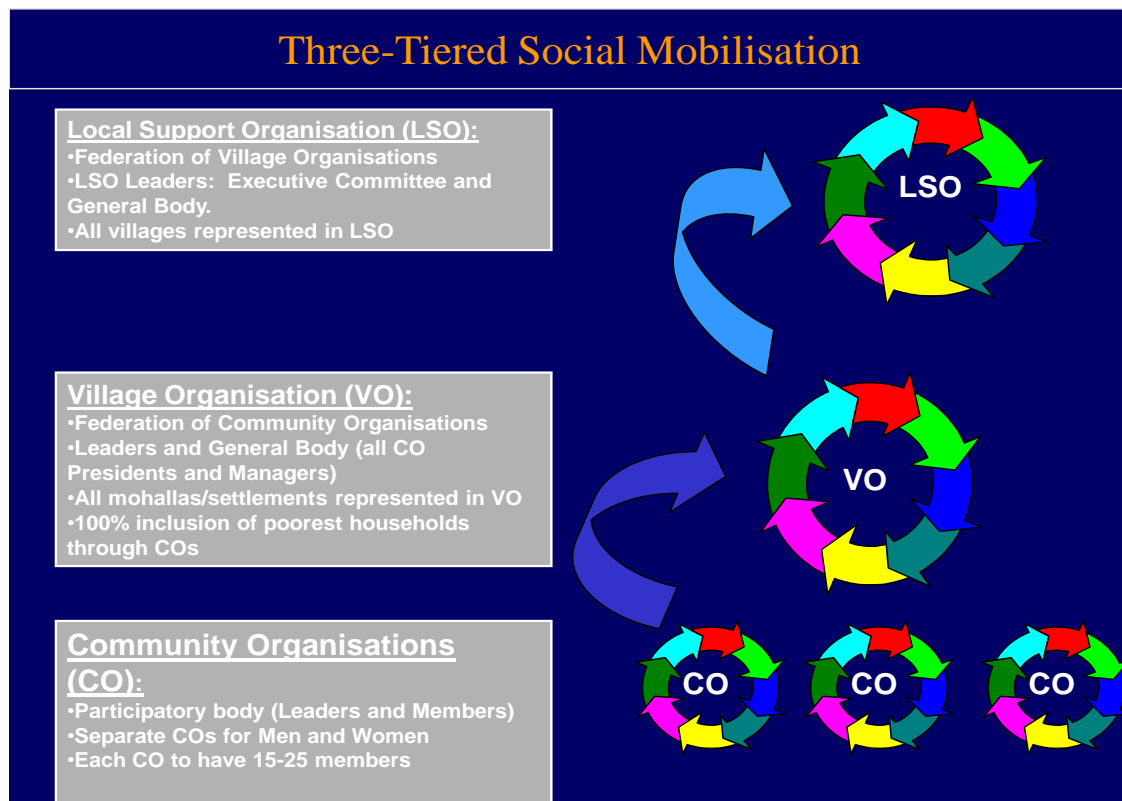
1. Experience world-wide has proved that social mobilisation is a prerequisite for poverty reduction and sustainable development of the general masses. This means that social mobilisation should be an integral part of all development programmes. So far RSPs are supporting social mobilisation programmes in their operational areas. However, externally supported Social mobilisation programmes will be unsustainable in the long term because it is never fully owned by the locals and also because it is costly. Hence externally driven social mobilisation will never get institutionalized in local systems. This requires establishing a permanent support system that is fully owned and managed by the communities themselves
2. An increasing concern about the institutional sustainability and relevance of RSP fostered community organisations (COs). At the moment, more than 95% of them are operating at sub-village level, are informal and unregistered hence ineligible for government resources. Their managerial skills and human and financial capacities are limited.
3. The ever increasing number of COs and weaning RSP staff support to them.

4. Social mobilisation warrants wider coverage (over 70%) of the communities for successful results. At the moment, the average UC level coverage of social mobilisation by RSPs is around 20%. The scaling up of social mobilisation under the current RSPs' arrangement is unsustainable due to high cost.

5. The development demands of the communities diversify over time which requires context specific local development programmes, and that is beyond the capacity of any RSP.

The Three Tier model, in many ways, qualified as a desirable institutional response to the multifaceted social mobilisation problems described above.

As a general principle, LSO will be formed at Union Council level, and not below. An LSO can be formed only in those union councils where at least 60% potential member households are organised in men and women COs. The LSO formation will be organized in two stages. In the first stage, the COs of each revenue village will form a member organization that will generically be called as Village Development Organization (VDO). In the second stage, the VDOs of the union council will establish the LSO as their member organisation. However, in smaller UCs, the COs can directly form an LSO.



2. Roles and responsibilities of LSO and its member organisations

The LSO and its member VDOs and COs will operate in their own capacity as independent organizations but at the same time they will coordinate with each other to supplement and complement the development efforts of each other. However, care has to be taken to avoid duplication of efforts. The development planning should start from CO level. Once a VDO is formed, a Village Development Plan should be developed to organise and manage village level development efforts. After formation of LSO, a union council level planning should be developed. In doing so, care must be taken that the roles and responsibilities of each organisation are clearly defined without any duplications and overlaps.

Broadly speaking, CO will be made responsible for implementing household level development activities, like savings and retail credit and CO level development projects like CPIs, vocational and managerial training etc. The VDO will be assigned to implement village level development initiatives. Examples are projects and schemes whose benefactors are more than one CO and village level campaigns for vaccination of animals. And the LSO will be responsible for formation and of new COs and capacity building of existing as well as new COs; coordination, resource mobilisation and planning and management of UC level programs and projects. A UC level plan has to be chalked out with a fair distribution of roles and responsibilities among the three bodies according to their own socio-economic conditions.

3. The men and women CO

A Community Organization comprises of 15-25 households who share common interest and live in geographical proximity. The CO is a multi sector entity. However, it focuses on increasing the incomes of its members through savings, credit and skills training. COs in a village may also work together for carrying out physical infrastructure projects, schools and health activities. Hence the COs are generic form of social organization that can be used for many purposes and can change its form according to the opportunities or resources that it accesses. The CO takes all its decisions through its general body meetings and its affairs are managed by a President and a Manager who are elected by the CO. The CO also maintains a bank account for the savings of its members which are pooled in that account.

The COs also act as implementing vehicles for the tasks assigned by the Village Development Organizations (VDOs) and local Support Organizations (LSOs).

It must be noted that the building blocks of RSP social mobilisation programme is the men and women COs. Therefore, their integrity, competency and functionality are extremely important. Obviously, without strong and dynamic COs, the super structures of VDO and LSO will never be able to achieve their development goals. In fact, the VDO

and LSO are there to support the CO to implement its poverty alleviation programme in an efficient and effective manner. Below are main functions of COs.

- Ensure regular meetings along with savings and keep proper accounts and records at CO level.
- Identify honest and competent activists for training and other capacity development programmes organised by RSP, LSO and other support organisations and make proper use of the trained specialist for their own development.
- Manage retail credit to its members and ensure proper record keeping of credit operations.
- In case of inter lending from CO savings keep proper records and conduct regular audit.
- Plan, execute and manage CO level development programs and schemes in collaboration with the LSO and other partners.
- Ensure inclusion and participation of poor in CO matters.
- Ensure transparency and accountability and promote democratic culture in CO programmes and projects.
- Ensure proper maintenance of completed projects.
- Ensure social cohesion through conflict resolution.

4. The VDO

The Village Development Organization is a cluster and representative of the COs in a village. A village is defined as a location comprising of many hamlets or a single settlement with a larger population or a location which has clear geographical identity or is known for a defined population. When COs in a given village sign a Term of Partnership to work together for one or more objectives and create an organizational structure, their collective institution is called a Village Development Organization. Each willing CO nominates one or two members to represent itself at the general body of the VDO. The VDO then nominates its office-bearers from and amongst its general body. The VDOs generally implement Physical Infrastructure projects, social awareness programmes and health and education related projects, i.e. activities which are required and used at the village level. They mobilize human and other resources from the COs. Some VDOs also run micro credit by pooling together COs savings or using grant or

revolving fund received from external agencies, and hire local level staff from the incomes they earn from the micro credit programme.

The VDOs also appoint committees to carry out specific activities such as Health, Education, Credit and Infrastructure effectively in their villages.

A VDO can be formed after organisation of the majority of village level households into COs. So before the establishment of the LSO, the VDO will be the representative body of COs. Therefore, it will have different roles before and after establishment of LSO at UC level. Therefore, the roles and responsibilities of VDO in both cases have been given below.

A. Roles and responsibilities of VDO in the absence of LSO:

- Support RSP to form new COs.
- Make village development plan and implement them in collaboration with member COs.
- Manage internal lending from savings of its member COs and ensure proper record keeping of its operations and do timely and accurate reporting to its members and other stakeholders.
- Establish development linkages with government, NGOs and private sector organisations for accessing services and resources to its member COs.
- Timely and accurate progress reporting of programmes and projects to member organisations, donors and other stakeholders.
- Generate and manage funds for its operational cost through various sources

B. After formation of LSO:

- Nominate members into the General Body of LSO
- Represent its member COs in the LSO
- Ensure free and fair communication and flow of information and data between LSO and its member COs
- Support LSO to form new COs and strengthen the existing ones.

- Arrange capacity building programs for member COs in collaboration with LSO.
- Make village development plan and implement it in collaboration with LSO and member COs.
- Manage internal lending from savings of its member COs and maintain proper record keeping of its operations and do timely and accurate reporting to its members and other stakeholders.
- Timely and accurate progress reporting of programmes and projects to member organisations, LSO and other stakeholders.
- Generate and manage funds for its operational cost through various sources

5. The LSO

The Local Support Organisation (LSO) is a supra organization of COs and VDOs of a particular union council or any other specified geographic area. By definition, an LSO is a formal and representative body of grassroots organisations to support participatory, equitable and sustainable development of a defined geographical area.

An LSO is formed when a reasonable number of COs create a critical mass of social capital in a union council; i.e. in the form of organized households. An LSO comprises of the representatives of all the VDOs in a Union Council who join hands for working together through the forum of COs and VOs for the betterment of the people.

Each VDO nominates at least two persons to represent the village at the LSO level. The General Body of the LSO comprises all such representatives. Generally this number is between 20 to 30 people; depending on the number of villages in a Union Council. The LSOs also form an Executive Body or a Board of Directors who are elected by the general body. Ordinarily they consist of office-bearers such as President, Vice-President, Treasurer, General Secretary, etc.

The prime duty of the LSO is to keep the COs and VOs active and to form more COs in the settlements which are not covered or those households who are left out in the first round. This is also done in terms of the LSO assisting the VDOs in their management and record-keeping. Similarly, when the VDOs are capable of carrying out their own management and record-keeping, they are then required to provide assistance to any CO that needs their help; in activities such as providing technical support for planning financial record-keeping.

In addition to this, LSOs help COs and VDOs by forging linkages with union council, local extension offices of agriculture, livestock, health and education etc. The LSO articulates a vision for the development of the union council area and its habitants. This vision is acquired through the discussions which take place in both CO and VDOs. Based on this vision, the LSO, VDOs and COs implement different productive and constructive activities.

This is the best forum for creating an enabling environment for the implementation of any new idea, for awareness-raising on issues like human rights, health, family planning etc. An LSO has the strength and capacity to forge linkages with various government and private agencies for accessing a variety of services, purely because of the sheer number of households that they represent. The LSO mobilizes human resources that it has in its general body or in its VDOs/COs for carrying out various campaigns such as for eradication of use of addictive drugs, increasing enrolment in schools or promoting reproductive health rights and birth spacing. Most LSOs form different committees for this purpose, in order to ensure the thoroughness of each of its development activities. Below is a list of common activities of LSOs.

- Form new men and women COs
- Strengthen member COs and VDOs through capacity building programmes on need basis.
- Identify opportunities and make area specific development plans and implement them in collaboration with member organisations.
- Form development partnership with local government at UC level.
- Establish development linkages with government, NGOs and private sector agencies for accessing services and resources to its member organisations as well as for its own operations and programmes.
- Mobilise human, financial, and other resources for its member organisations.
- Take whole sale credit from RSP and other financial institutions and retail it to its member VDOs and COs on a mutually agreed service charge. Keep proper record of its credit operations and do timely and accurate reporting to its member organisations, the Support Organisation and other stakeholders.
- Regular monitoring of programmes and projects of its member VDOs and COs.

- Represent its member organisations on various forums, networks and associations.
- Plan, implement and manage union council level or intra VDO projects and programmes
- Timely and accurate progress reporting of programmes and projects to member organisations, donors and other stakeholders.
- Generate and manage funds for its operational cost through various sources

