

## Brief Note on SRUTI Fellowships for Democracy Dignity & Justice

### INTRODUCTION

Starting out as a vision and a one-person operation in 1983, today SRUTI is a small, but full-fledged organisation that has carved out a niche for itself in field of voluntary action in India. The Founder members of SRUTI are

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| 1. Tara Ali Baig (Late) | Founder SOS Children's Village                     |
| 2. Ela Bhatt            | Director, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) |
| 3. Samir Chaudhari      | Director, Child in Need Institute (CINI)           |
| 4. Poonam Muttreja      | Founder DASTKAR                                    |
| 5. V. Ramalingaswamy    | Former Director General, ICMR                      |
| 6. Bunker Roy           | Director, Social Work and Research Center (SWRC)   |
| 7. Lotika Sarkar        | Former Professor of Law, Delhi University          |

The growth in SRUTI over the years has been gradual, evolutionary and organic. SRUTI's central focus is the Fellowship Programme, whose objective it is to provide support to a dedicated individual - or a small group of such individuals - who has initiated community development work at the grass root level in a rural area or an urban slum. The SRUTI Fellowship Programme is designed to identify and assist such individuals and groups (known as SRUTI Fellows) so that they can continue on their chosen path without worrying about supporting themselves and their families. Since its inception, SRUTI has supported the work of 120 grass roots groups. SRUTI's outreach has increased and currently outreach of SRUTI Fellows is over 5000 villages and 200 urban clusters covering more than 5 lakh families. The SRUTI Fellowship programme encompasses both financial and non-financial support. In addition to the Fellowship programme, SRUTI provides Advocacy and campaign support to Fellows. SRUTI currently supports 31 groups (190 individuals) spread over 12 states.

SRUTI Fellows work with the marginalised sections of society namely Adivasis, Dalits and other backward classes. It so happens that 80% of the Fellows supported by SRUTI work in tribal areas. The main thrust areas of the Fellows work are:

- Mobilisation and organisation of marginalised communities for their basic rights over livelihood resources like land, forest and water and ensure their participation and control over decision-making in panchayats (local self governance bodies) and other governance structures.
- Building up community leadership (both men and women).
- Identifying problems/issues with the communities, which they are facing like education, health, minimum wages, employment, drinking water, irrigation etc.
- Working out a strategy and perspective to take up the issues which includes capacity & perspective building on issues of livelihood, networking and alliances with like minded groups.
- Advocacy and campaign support.

The mandate for the SRUTI Fellowship & Advocacy Programme is all India. SRUTI Fellows at present are working in the following states:- Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan & Delhi. Even within these states the SRUTI Fellows have been working in the remotest and backward areas.

SRUTI's work is supported by grants from institutions and own fund raising efforts. For the Fellowship programme SRUTI raises funds from India viz. interest from endowment grants from SDTT and SRTT, SRUTI's own corpus, grants from institutions and SRUTI's own fund raising efforts like scrap collections, fund raising events, souvenir, individual and corporate donations.

### SOME SRUTI INITIATIVES

- Education

#### Alternative schooling by SRUTI Fellows

SRUTI is supporting four learning centres for children. All the centres have developed uniquely designed curriculum and learning and teaching methodologies to make the learning meaningful and inclusive. The centres are situated in the serene environment of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Around 400 children are a part of alternative education run by our following fellows.



**Adharshila School**, located in Sakad village of Badwani district, Madhya Pradesh, is being run by SRUTI Fellows Amit and Jayshree. Adharshila Shikshan Kendra was started in 1998 to give quality and value education to tribal children and while doing this redefine the meaning of education in the context of the poor people of India and develop innovative ideas and curriculum rooted in the cultural context of the area. There are more than 150 students studying in the school. In Adharshila School all the students appeared in 8<sup>th</sup> examination were successful.

**Manthan School** in Jhiri, Jhalawar District, Rajasthan is being run by SRUTI Fellow Devendra and his wife Sudhi. The school caters to the dropouts as well as fresh learners. Most of the children come from the backward communities in the area. The educational standard in the villages was very poor and the objective was to improve the educational levels in the area. This year for the first time 9 students appeared for class 10<sup>th</sup> exams. 8 cleared the exams. Success rate of Rajasthan govt schools is only 40% while of the open schools is only 5.5 %. Apart from regular classes, a lot of emphasis is given on developing vocational skills of students such as agriculture, card making, pottery, carpentry, sewing and weaving.

**Sobran Smriti Shikshapeeth**, Chilgu village, Saraikela, Jharkhand is in its second year now, being run by SRUTI fellow Arvind Anjum. 80% of them are tribals – mostly from displaced families from the Chandil dam. Rest are Dalits and OBC's. The school now has five classes from nursery to class fourth. There are three teachers in the school.

**Chetana**, a school in the serene valleys of Bal Ganga River in Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand has been established by SRUTI fellow Trepan Singh Chauhan. Innovative learning methodologies like art in education and theatre in education have been introduced in the school. The school was started with the strength of eighteen students.

#### **Other educational initiatives**

- Delhi Shramik Sangathan, based in Delhi, through its consistent efforts and mobilisation of people completely checked the dropouts from schools in Vikaspuri area. Through a prolonged and consistent effort in Hastal area, DSS convinced the local population to get their children enrolled in the schools. More than 4000 admissions have taken place. For the renewed number of children at least sixty teachers were required. Through the DSS campaigns, 50 teachers have been appointed
- Ensured better implementation of mid day meal schemes benefiting around 2000 children in Dist Satna, Madhya Pradesh.
- Helped around 350 ST students to get caste certificates which ensured them educational scholarships worth Rs 400 per student per year – cumulative benefit of Rs 1,40,000 to the students.

#### • **Slum resettlement in Delhi – Right to life with Dignity**

SRUTI Fellow Anita working with slum dwellers organisation Delhi Shramik Sangathan in west Delhi has been voicing their concerns against mindless eviction. They are also organising the people who have been evicted and given new plots. In one such area in Hastal around 2400 families have been given alternative residential plots but without any basic civic amenities like potable water, electricity, schools, transport facility, health facility, road, sewerage, PDS shops etc. Apart from taking other issues the families were concerned about the future of their children as the only primary school in the area was denying admissions. SRUTI helped to prioritise and strategise the intervention. As a result not only in Hastal but other relocated colonies, DSS has helped the people to get basic facilities in their areas.



#### • **Saving the environment – Green Initiatives**

Gudalur taluka of Tamil Nadu is a unique biosphere in itself. It has a vast range of floral, fauna and agricultural diversities. About 3.5 lakh people live in the area. A big number of them are landless labourers. Big trees in the thick forests have been cut down and smuggled out with the connivance of forest department. SRUTI fellow M.S.Selvraj has initiated the formation of a people's organisation, VTMS to protect the forest. 50-acre forest has been recovered so far.



Jhiri, a beautiful village surrounded by Malwa Hills in Jhalawar District of Rajasthan, one finds healthy forests on an area of more than 100 hectares and the rest of the hill slopes are completely barren, without any sign of a single tree. Hum Kisan sangathan under dynamic leadership of Devendra Bhai has prepared the local people to develop a respect towards the relationship with the trees and as a result, the areas near the village has a

good amount of trees. To conserve the forest, villagers and the sangathan activists had to face a number of threats from timber mafias and sometime even the forest officials whoever tried to destruct the forests. In Uttarakhand SRUTI Fellow Trepan Singh Chauhan has helped the people to implement and constitute more than 100 Van Panchayats. The Visthapit Mukti Vahini, headed by SRUTI Fellow Arvind Anjum, is a case in point. The Vahini has been instrumental in forming Van Suraksha Samitis, which are protecting a total of 700 acres of forest in Chandil, Jharkhand. The Adivasi Chetna Sangathan, (ACS) is another example of what people's participation can achieve. Working in a remote corner of Orissa's Dhenkanal District, the ACS has not only regenerated an entire hillock that had been laid bare by illegal stone mining, but has also motivated 20 villages to protect 400 acres of adjoining forest.

▪ **Livelihood Initiatives**

K. Sahadeviah and B. Sunanda from Andhra Pradesh have organized women with the help of micro credit programs. More than 1500 families have benefited from this activity who have received loans worth Rs 40 lakhs for income generation activities. Aruna Prasad Dihudi and Prafulla Mishra from Boudh and Nayagarh Districts, Orissa have ensured continued access for Adivasis to their natural livelihood resources in the sanctuary area. Women are able to collect Tendu leaf and Sal seeds which was being earlier denied to them.

▪ **Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation**

SRUTI has also reached out to people during natural calamities

- **Orissa cyclone**
- **Uttarakhand and Gujarat earth quakes**
- **Tsunami**

When the Tsunami waves hit India's east coast, SRUTI teamed up with K.Sahadavaiah, a SRUTI Fellow working with Dalit communities in Andhra Pradesh, and undertook a massive relief and rehabilitation operation with the generous help of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Novib, Netherlands. Together they contributed over Rs 1.65 crores for range of interventions, including:

- Emergency relief consisting of rice and cash distribution
- Replacement of fishing nets – individual and community
- Donation of fibre boats for community fishing
- Replacement of damaged catamarans
- Distribution of cycles



The thrust in SRUTI's recent interventions has been on rehabilitation by restoring livelihoods.

**Some Quantitative Aspects of the SRUTI Fellowship Programmes**

1.	<b>Forest Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest conservation on more than 20,000 acres of forestland being promoted by SRUTI Fellows.</li> <li>• Occupation and Access to Dali Lands (wrongly classified under forests) by Katkari Tribals in Dist Raigad, Maharashtra. Around 9450 acres of land is under possession of 4725 Katkari Tribal families.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Land Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around 5780 families have got land entitlement to 11319 acres of Revenue land.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 EGS schools opened in remote areas benefiting around 885 children</li> <li>• 11 new school buildings constructed worth Rs 16.5 lakhs</li> <li>• Ensured better implementation of mid day meal schemes benefiting around 2000 children in Dist Satna, M.P.</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Below Poverty Line (BPL)/ Public Distribution System (PDS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The market rates for rice is around Rs 10/kg and Rs 8/kg for wheat. Under Antodaya scheme the rates are respectively Rs. 3 and Rs. 2 only. SRUTI Fellows ensured to get around 1,01,471 families enrolled under the AAY. The cumulative saving for the above people work out to more than Rs 28.61 crores per annum.</li> </ul>

5.	<b>Implementation of govt Schemes Indira Awas Yojana (Housing)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective efforts ensured 497 Indira Awas Yojana houses to the families. Each Family got Rs Rs 22,000 per house.</li> <li>• A cumulative benefit of Rs 1,09,34,000.</li> </ul>
	<b>Sanitation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 410 latrines constructed by families</li> </ul>
	<b>Old age pension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Age pensions to 235 people – Rs 100 pm.</li> <li>• A cumulative benefit of Rs 2,82,000.</li> </ul>
	<b>Drinking water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 new tube wells worth Rs Rs 3.22 lakh and more than 50 hand pumps repaired.</li> <li>• Under Swajaldhara 5 units set up benefiting around 125 families.</li> <li>• 3 new open wells costing Rs 20,000 constructed.</li> </ul>
	<b>Electricity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electricity connection – 8557 families.</li> </ul>
	<b>Disability benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability benefits to 165 people</li> </ul>
	<b>Roads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach Roads to tribal villages built in 15 villages costing around Rs 15.14 lakh.</li> <li>• SRUTI Fellow working in Gaya, Bihar got the govt to build 6 kms of road in a remote area.</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Minimum Wages/Employment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some areas SRUTI Fellows pressurized the govt to start food for work programme, drought relief programmes. This resulted in the creation of 2,04,450 mandays work in different areas. Taking an average wage as Rs 50/per day/per worker cumulative total wages works out to Rs 1,02,22,500.</li> </ul>
8.	<b>Protecting and enhancing livelihood opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000 ft long lift irrigation system being laid down in Gaya, Bihar</li> <li>• 4 fishermen cooperative societies resulted in an appx annual saving of Rs 54 lakhs to the 800 fishermen families.</li> <li>• In Boudh district of Orissa, 13 SHGs got help of Rs.4,81,000 in the form of Leaf plate stitching machines.</li> <li>• In Satakosia Wildlife Sanctuary, Orissa, 800 tribal and Dalit families plucked tendu leaf this year and their gross income was supplemented by Rs.7,73,193</li> </ul>
9.	<b>Other ongoing campaigns and Struggles by SRUTI Fellows</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti liquor campaigns in Orissa, Uttaranchal. In Sundergarh, 40 unauthorised liquor shops and 2 licensed shops in Jharsuguda and Sundergarh closed benefiting around 2500 families. For the time being this area is a liquor free zone. This has resulted in a cumulative saving of Rs 91,25,000 per annum for these families.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness campaign on Untouchability and prevention of Atrocities against SC &amp; ST Act going on in some places.</li> <li>• Legal training and awareness also going on.</li> <li>• Efforts made to register rape and atrocity cases and struggle for justice.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group in Delhi have ensured that Municipal Health employees like ANM visit the slum clusters ensuring 100 % immunization.</li> </ul>

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