

**ARAVALI Perspective Plan
(2005-2010)**

**An exploration of potential and future
directions**

**ARAVALI
November 2004**

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Chapter 1

A Renewal Of Purpose and Programmes

This Perspective Plan document marks the crossing over of ARAVALI to a new, strategic phase in its organisational life. Since its activation by the Government of Rajasthan in 1997, ARAVALI has grown considerably in its range of concerns, its programmes, its networks and its ambitions as organisation committed to strengthening development partnerships, promoting innovations and adding value to the capacities of the NGO sector. Its priorities, programmes and structure have largely been guided by a first perspective document prepared in ARAVALI's enthusiastic and energetic early days (1999). The first perspective plan document stipulated a review and a renewal of the proposed overall plans, programmes and structures at the end of 5 years and it is this need that this second document attempts to address. This Perspective Plan is concerned with the five-year period of 2005 – 2010.

The broad purpose of this perspective plan document therefore is to **revisit ARAVALI's strategic direction, programme priorities and institutional arrangements** for the next five years. It provides the basis for more detailed, operational planning while maintaining a flexibility to respond to new developments and opportunities that may not be evident today yet may be important in relation to ARAVALI's mandate.

This perspective plan document is the culmination of a detailed exercise conducted by ARAVALI with facilitation from a team of external, experienced institutional specialists. The process of its preparation included:

- An analysis through literature review and consultations of ARAVALI's external environment and the context in which it operates as a support organisation.
- A broad review and critique of ARAVALI's programmes and interventions through study of reports, evaluations and detailed discussions and interviews with staff teams;
- Consultations with ARAVALI's key NGO partners and members in its priority sectors;
- Consultations with Government officials concerned or connected with ARAVALI over the past years

The formulation of perspective plan document was an iterative process of internally reviewing, refining and finalising the proposals contained in this document. ARAVALI is on the threshold of initiating and formalising changes that will move it in line with the propositions of this perspective plan.

This plan document begins with a broad review of trends and issues in ARAVALI's external environment comprising of Government, NGOs and their partnerships (Chapter 2); Chapter 3 takes stock of ARAVALI's activities, outcomes and challenges in the past 7 years while identifying the main strategic questions it is now addressing; ARAVALI's vision, role and strategic mandate for the coming five year period is described in Chapter 4 while the following Chapter 5 identifies and describes the main priorities and programmes ARAVALI will dedicate itself to in the coming period. Chapter 6 sets out ARAVALI's proposed institutional arrangements and partnerships while Chapter 7 lists the next steps ARAVALI is taking to operationalise this plan.

Chapter 2

A Review of Development Issues and Institutions in Rajasthan

As an agency committed to better development partnerships across the state, ARAVALI need to draw heavily upon the trends, strengths and weaknesses of Rajasthan's development and institutional environment. The purpose of this chapter thus is to capture the salient features of government policy, NGO growth and the environment of GO NGO partnership in the state.

Being anchored in the government ARAVALI has been witness and participant to the debates and trends in the priorities and policy environment across several departments. In relation to the NGO sector ARAVALI has had a vantage view of the sector's recent growth and its issues both as a facilitator yet often as a participant posed with similar issues and challenges. The following commentary largely draws upon this dual understanding of the two important players with who ARAVALI is concerned.

2.1 Trends in State Priorities and Interventions

Rural development continues to be a high investment and concern area for the Government of Rajasthan and a number of new priorities have emerged in the recent past.

Both rural health and education have continued to receive high attention from the state with the launching of new initiatives to cover hitherto uncovered populations and regions. The Human Development Report brought renewed focus in policy and official circles that delivery of health and education require innovation and quality expansion if the state has to meaningfully fight chronic poverty. Beyond the management of school and higher education services, GOR has always been engaged with innovative approaches to expanding the reach of education. Through the last 7 years the state has witnessed the Lok Jumbish, Rajiv Gandhi Pathshala, DPEP and the more recent Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in rural areas. Whereas private sector is now investing rapidly and heavily in urban schools and higher education institutions, the government is still the largest provider in rural areas.

For poverty alleviation in the state, the Swarna Jayanti Grameen Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) has come to be the largest instrument for providing financial assistance to the BPL families. At the same time there has been an increased investment in the employment generation activities of the government under the various central and state levels schemes. Drought management has been a recurrent feature of the state's response given the high frequency at which rains have failed over major parts of the state in the past decade. This has placed enormous strain on the state machinery and resources.

Recognising the relevance of programmes to improve water and agriculture production in rain fed conditions, the state has been amongst the largest recipients of funding in the country for watershed development. As a result of this the watershed bureaucracy has grown substantially and the programme has gone through many institutional anchors and implementation agencies including the NGOs, PRIs and Block Offices. On the theme of water management the Rajasthan Water Reconsolidation Project provides investments for rehabilitating and renewal of management of

older irrigation and water harvesting systems. The coverage of PHED in rural areas, particularly in the desert districts of western Rajasthan, has grown well thus providing water infrastructure to large number of the villages in the state.

While watershed development and water harvesting does receive large state sponsorship, there has been a decline in the investment made in the agriculture sector, particularly in extension services and livestock development. The two concerned departments have suffered from cuts in budget and staff attrition.

2.2 NGOs Growth and Issues

The growth of NGOs in Rajasthan in the past 7 years is remarkable in numbers, yet less impressive in institutional capacity and scale. As noted in the first perspective plan document, NGOs of the state are extremely heterogeneous and hence do not lend easily to generalisations on trends and gaps. The NGO sector however does still continue to be a pool of alternative development thought, culture and practice in the state.

In terms of capacity the larger, older organisations have been able to steadily access funds and trained personnel. The larger organisations continue to be multi-sectoral rather than specialised and funded by multiple-donors.

At this point there is a cadre of medium sized NGOs across the state that have reached a stage of organisational maturity and stability. The funding to these organisations is reasonably assured and there is a generation of experienced personnel in these organisations. These NGOs have largely reached their peak in terms of staff, coverage, sectors and scale and find it difficult to make major shifts in what they do.

There is a constant flurry of new organisations being formed everywhere. Majority of these remain on paper and go into oblivion after a short period of struggle and search for funds of any nature and source. Some survive mostly on small grants and schemes or through fellowship supports from larger organisations. A number of those who have slowly gained a foothold at least at the district level include those who've been able to get short-term funds through government projects such as DPIIP or UNICEF funded water and sanitation projects etc. A few of these will survive, mature and slowly join the cadre of medium sized NGOs and plateau off at that point.

While size and scale is one useful distinction to be made among NGOs, the difference in their orientation and the nature of their work defines more clear categories. Thus in Rajasthan there is a large cadre of welfare and charity oriented organisations among NGOs. These agencies respond to humanitarian challenges and needs through public welfare activities. Many of these are community specific in their origins and these often raise public donations and charities.

The second category of NGOs in the state are the development service providers that have longer term sectoral programmes and projects. Within this category there is a large array of agencies – some are specialist organisations while others are multi-sectoral; some are location-tied while others work across locations; there are organisations that have access to international funding and those that do not!

The intermediary, support organisation forms a third important category in the NGO canvas of Rajasthan. Rather like ARAVALI itself, these organisations provide services and inputs to other agencies. The inputs can range from technical (AFPRO) to institutional (ARAVALI / Unnati) to related to subject matter (Digantar / Bodh in education).

The activist and advocacy groups are another type of non-governmental social change action even though such groups do not self – identify with other mainstream NGOs of the state. These groups have a strong ideological grounding and are likely to be more in confrontation with the government than others based on their demands for policy reforms, better governance and social justice.

In terms of regional concentration, the Jaipur division has far overtaken Udaipur in terms of numbers. NGO activity has picked up considerably in the western districts of Jodhpur and Barmer with fairly steady donor attention to these regions. In ARAVALI's experience a vast number of NGOs rapidly came up in districts where DPIP is being implemented. Even so there are still a number of districts that despite high concentration of poverty or backwardness have a poor NGO presence.

NGOs tend to be heavily involved in education, social equity and justice, micro credit, natural resource management, local governance through strengthening panchayati raj and small enterprise promotion. The thin presence of NGOs in rural health care is often striking even though a good number participate in related activities such as health education and adolescents' awareness work. Similarly there are few NGOs in the area of non-farm, service and labour based employment though a well-known number exists in the craft and artisan sectors. Arid and rain fed agriculture and allied sectors like extension, research or technology development have few takers among NGOs.

A general lack of accountability and many charges of corrupt practices continue to plague the sector and not surprisingly the media and general public opinion is ever too ready to paint all NGOs with one colour. The reality is that the sector also offers many an employment and business opportunity. The sector is being exploited as an employment option, particularly by unemployed, enterprising youth with connections in the government. With this ever growing number, commitment or value based functioning is mere rhetoric.

Even where questions of integrity have been put to rest, the very real gaps in competence and skills remain the major challenge for NGOs. Leaving aside the national or state level organisations, the sector fails to attract or retain well-qualified, specialists or talented personnel. Most of the staff tends to be modestly educated with limited skills in core management functions including planning, monitoring, communication and fund raising thus heavily depending on external help (and imagination). Schools of Social Work within the state have not made a significant dent in the mainstream NGOs' personnel pool largely on account of mediocrity in the training they impart. In the past few years a new stream of personnel from institutions like XISS has opened up and is bringing a large number of young professionals from east India.

2.3 Experiences in GO NGO Collaboration

ARAVALI's first perspective plan noted the premises of GO NGO collaboration as a facilitator of participatory development and much of this continues to be valid. At this time the most visible expression of this is a draft NGO policy that provides a framework for institutionalising NGO participation across state agencies, departments and programmes. The policy is on the threshold of being finalised and needs more consensus building and consultations however it is a positive start towards formalising GO NGO collaborations.

During the period under review the experience of GO NGO collaboration has been a varied and difficult one. Collaboration has become predominantly *contractual* in character wherein the government department or project provides and monitors funds while the NGO implements a pre determined project with specific targets and deliverables. DPIP is a recent representation of this arrangement in the state.

Though the rhetoric of NGO involvement in government is riding a new high, the real challenge remains of operationalising this in terms of selection procedures, fund disbursement and management and monitoring. Within the senior bureaucracy NGOs are being frequently seen as implementers in substitution of government's own machinery and a number of large state investments await resolution of operational issues in this regard.

As noted earlier the DPIP housed in the Rural Development Department is a single largest NGO driven programme of the government. It is being implemented in 7 districts and NGOs have a comprehensive role in planning, implementation, technical assistance and monitoring of clusters' activities. In addition to this a few NGOs have also been sanctioned special SGSY projects. NGOs have also been invited to facilitate the formation and linkage of BPL groups with SGSY activities at block level.

In the health sector the Pulse Polio Campaign has been the most significant rallying point for NGOs though it has required major funding to them from the health department. The NGOs have seen it as a universally important campaign and have volunteered for it everywhere. The National Aids Control Programme and the RCH programme involve NGOs on a more formal basis for education, training and targeted interventions.

Similarly the Women and Child Department contracts NGOs for ICDS implementation, the Social Welfare Department has a wide range of schemes intended specifically for NGOs and even the PHED has a special bilateral programme in which NGOs are partners for community mobilisation. Very recently the electricity boards have begun to solicit NGO participation in enhancing consumer awareness for reducing distribution losses etc.

Watershed development is one sector in which NGO participation had high potential and indeed existed shortly only to decline almost completely. ARAVALI was an active participant in building stronger capacities and a more favourable environment for NGOs' participation in watershed development. It could however not sustain this in face of growing administrative difficulties and contrary policies for NGO participation. Forestry and forest management is another area in which GO-NGO interaction, that was anyways difficult, has almost ceased to exist. The Forest Department remains apprehensive of NGOs' position on forest encroachments and rights on protected areas

while NGOs have become frustrated with the poor progress on improving the policy for more participatory forest management.

The space for policy level consultations and healthy debates between government and NGOs on key issues remains a small and contested one. Indeed the platforms and forums for these were never very robust or regular ones and these are not yet institutionalised in at the level of departments. ARAVALI has indeed attempted to create a few forums in a few sectors and even where these have worked well (like in the watershed sector), the lack of a favourable policy does not help the cause of GO NGO collaboration at all.

The structures for GO NGO collaboration and interactions at the local, district or block level are largely non-existent or dependent heavily on personal interests and orientations of the senior government officers. It is at this level where most operational difficulties arise and remain unsolved, unattended to a point of becoming dysfunctional.

Even though there is a louder call for NGOs to participate in state and departmental programmes, ARAVALI still counters very fundamental kind of suspicion and doubts about NGOs' competence, credibility and cause among government officials. Perhaps the greatest challenge for ARAVALI is to change these perceptions while helping in overcoming the many constraints that influence the full potential of the NGO community as a whole.

Chapter 3

A Review of ARAVALI's Growth and Challenges

Since the time that the first perspective plan was formulated in 1998, ARAVALI has chartered a brisk journey and has now firmly arrived to occupy a number of unique niches on the development canvas of Rajasthan. As an agency with the tough mandate of promoting GO NGO collaboration in the state, it has gained visibility both in the government and NGO circles of the state.

This chapter reviews the growth of ARAVALI in its programme and organisational aspects over the past 7 years. It highlights the challenges that face it and its strengths and weaknesses as an apex support and intermediary development agency in the state.

3.1 Main Programmes

ARAVALI was established with the broad mission of facilitating GO-NGO collaboration and strengthening the NGO sector. To promote effective collaboration it is necessary that the environment within which partnerships are developed is conducive and supportive. Thus in past years ARAVALI has worked on assisting the Government departments and NGOs understand this interface and in setting up smoother mechanisms for facilitating the relationship. ARAVALI also believes that collaboration will work only when there are a large number of organisations with the requisite capacity to work with government. ARAVALI has thus chosen to work with a large number of small and medium size NGOs to assist them in enhancing their human and institutional capacities to be able to collaborate with the government.

To achieve the above mentioned objectives ARAVALI has organised itself into four major functional groups including:

- Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- Micro-finance and Livelihoods (MFL)
- Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement (HICE)
- Collaborations and Support Group (CSG)

The summaries of activities undertaken in each unit with their strengths and weaknesses are mentioned below

3.1.1 Natural Resource Management

ARAVALI believes that natural resources can be sustainable only when they generate a meaningful livelihood for the people who depend on them and when their organisations are centrally involved in the management of these resources. Under its NRM mandate ARAVALI is working towards building capacities of NGOs to undertake more proficient, technical and participatory, work. ARAVALI also seeks that government policy should favour community-based management of natural resources. ARAVALI has taken following initiatives in the advancement of NGO capacities and improving policy environment:

MERC (Management of Environmental Resources by Communities): ARAVALI's initiative in NRM sector took off with its association with MERC programme funded by Aga Khan Foundation in 1998. Under this project ARAVALI provided intensive capacity building support to fourteen NGOs out of which four NGOs were included as implementation partners. Areas of support included perspective planning, organisation development, fund leveraging, providing training on using Log Frame Analysis (LFA), improving accounting systems and developing documentation skills. ARAVALI also worked with other support organisations in the state and outside the state. The task of grant management was also handled by ARAVALI. **Box 1** below mentions ARAVALI's efforts in the area of Policy and Research in the first few years of its inception.

Box 1: ARAVALI's NRM Portfolio in the areas of Policy and Research (1998 – 2002)

MERC provided the opportunity for ARAVALI to engage intensively with NGOs as well as start up a number of important policy initiatives for NRM advancement. Some key ones include:

- Research studies were conducted by ARAVALI with a view to identify problems of implementation and suggest policy level changes: the first was a “study of watershed development programme in Rajasthan” which has been widely shared with government, NGO sector and other stakeholders. The second was a study on Joint Forest Management (JFM) in which a situational analysis of the programme in two districts of Udaipur and Chittorgarh was carried out. The study identified several constraints and bottlenecks to effective JFM implementation. However, ARAVALI was not able to get, as much mileage out of this study for policy change as it desired. Considering the GOR focus on PRIs, ARAVALI organised a study on the role of PRIs as PIAs in watershed projects and exploring their capacities and prospects for association with NGOs.
- A format for output based monitoring was developed which was found useful by GOR in tracking the impact of the programme. Idea of placing information about budget and expenditure in public domain was found useful by GOR at the state level in promoting transparency in the programme. A draft format for preparing DPR in Hindi was accepted by the Government. ARAVALI prepared a set of criteria and procedures for selection of NGOs for implementation of watershed development programme. ARAVALI also prepared a list of capable NGOs to whom the projects could be sanctioned. However the projects were not sanctioned to NGOs as most projects were sanctioned to Govt. Departments. A similar process was followed with two other programmes of rural development viz. SGSY and DPIP. These have been accepted by the government and implemented.
- In addition ARAVALI undertook intensive policy initiatives at the district level in Rajsamand district. Here it experimented with various systems like: training staff of Government PIA than tried working with DRDA rather than PIA and in the final stage worked with the community. While the field unit adopted different strategies at different times, the results on the ground were mixed. Much depended on the PIAs and their attitudes. PIAs often feel threatened when efforts are made to improve transparency. This could be on account of rent-seeking behaviour, which is not uncommon in government schemes. It is possible that the PIA which did not co-operate at the field level, felt threatened in this case as well. Perhaps the biggest achievement of the field-unit was to get accepted within the district administration as an ally in management of people oriented programmes. This is evidenced from the *NGO-forum* established at the district level on the initiative of the district collector who nominated ARAVALI (field-unit) as its member secretary. The collector plans to nominate specific NGOs for specific sectors and specific areas within the district. Their role would be to motivate and strengthen the committees as well as the PRIs. Interestingly, this forum preceded the formation of the NGO-cell at the state level.

SCALE (Sustainable Community based Approaches to Livelihood Enhancement): Based on the promising work undertaken by ARAVALI during the MERC programme ARAVALI was able to extend its support from its donor (AKF) for a larger, and more innovation dissemination driven SCALE programme. Under this programme ARAVALI aims to achieve a wider impact on policies and practices relating to enhancement of livelihoods in Rajasthan. Box 2 below summarises the objectives and efforts undertaken till now under SCALE programme.

Box 2: Up Scaling Innovations in NRM - ARAVALI's SCALE mandate and efforts till now

ARAVALI aims to do the following in the next 10 years:

- Improve and innovate NRM and livelihood enhancement practices widely adopted by community, CBO's and Government in semi -arid/rain-fed areas through documentation and dissemination of good practices, capacity building of partners and action research. During the SCALE period ARAVALI would focus on building capacity of 50 NGOs who in turn would work in about 1000 villages.
- Improved and responsive policy and procedural framework for NRM and rural livelihoods at the state and national level through identification and prioritisation of issues for procedural and policy changes, field research, documentation and dissemination of good practices, networking and by arranging exposure visits of policy makers.

Work is well underway under the SCALE programme. ARAVALI has made training modules to increase the effectiveness of training programme on watershed. ARAVALI is making a documentary film on watershed programmes, which is aimed to help the implementing organisations to popularise watershed programmes. Film would also work as a training aid. ARAVALI has undertaken studies to assess the existing situation of rain fed agriculture and animal husbandry in Rajasthan. A study on the potential for Participatory Irrigation Management is under progress. Networking and Policy advocacy

Supplementary Observation Mechanism for Watershed Development Projects: The Government of India has initiated a process of observation mechanism for tracking pace and quality of implementation of watershed projects in the nature of on-line real-time monitoring of Watershed Projects in every state of the country. The Government of Rajasthan has appointed ARAVALI as the state level institute for this purpose. ARAVALI is co-ordinating this programme at state level. ARAVALI's role is to identify suitable district level agencies for undertaking this assignment at the district level, training them, analysing reports and sharing it with the central and state government. ARAVALI has developed a good network of district level institutions comprising NGOs, research institutions of ICAR, and KVKs to do this task at the district level. All of these institutions have been oriented and the program has started from June 2003. Government of India is providing necessary financial support to this initiative. GOR has appointed ARAVALI to take up mid term evaluation of 87 watershed projects in four districts of Rajasthan.

Interface workshops: ARAVALI also organised interface workshop between ETC-India and voluntary organisations to explore the potential of working on sustainable agriculture. ARAVALI also organised a workshop between NGOs, Dairy unions, NDDB and Department of Animal husbandry to explore an integrated approach for the growth of dairying sector in Rajasthan.

ARAVALI's Strengths and Weaknesses in NRM Sector:

ARAVALI's support in the NRM sector has been both intensive and extensive. It has been on an intensive basis to relatively few NGOs where a long-term plan for support is developed and provided after careful need assessment and planning. The support on an extensive basis is provided to a larger number of NGOs where support is provided mainly in the training mode. Both kinds of support have been found useful by NGOs and have helped ARAVALI in earning respect amongst NGOs for being a capable and serious player as an NRM support organisation. However support has been more of a general nature e.g. organisation development and planning rather than being more specialised or technical in nature. Some areas where more support could have been provided are designing and planning cost-effective water harvesting structures, ground water management, and organic farming and sustainable agriculture.

ARAVALI is steadily building its research capacities in the last few years and their research have a good practical orientation. Some examples of these are the research studies conducted by them on watershed, JFM, rain-fed agriculture and animal husbandry. ARAVALI has also enhanced its documentation skills by initiating a monthly brief called "*Pahal Logon Ki*" that documents the success stories from the field. However some of these important initiatives could not be taken to logical conclusions e.g. resulting into better programme design, joint programmes or policy changes.

ARAVALI has been able to build good network with large number of organisations both inside and outside Rajasthan and with field based organisations e.g. SADGURU, GVT, IFFDC, AKRSP(I), Seva-mandir and DSC and funding organisations e.g. Aga Khan Foundation, ICEF, UNDP, SDC, The world Bank etc. These contacts could prove to be extremely useful in near future.

ARAVALI has been able to garner funding support for the next eight years under the SCALE programme from Aga Khan Foundation. More importantly SCALE programme's objective and ARAVALI's mandate broadly match. This synergy largely takes away the pressure of surviving and fund raising and ARAVALI can focus all energy of achieving its mandate.

ARAVALI has gained visibility in the rural development and watershed department. ARAVALI is consulted on a frequent basis by these departments and advice is often sought on matters of policy importance. Though ARAVALI has **not been able to develop the same level of contacts in departments like irrigation, agriculture and animal husbandry** as in the rural development department. Similarly contacts at the district level remain rather limited. Even though ARAVALI has build good contacts in the rural development and watershed department but it has not resulted into collaborative engagements on the ground. The relationship with government largely remains unequal with most decision-making (by government) being unilateral.

3.1.2 Micro-Finance and Livelihoods (MFL):

The MFL group seeks to address problems related to poverty by promoting and broad basing the availability of micro-finance and supporting livelihood promotion. Major focus in the last few years of the operation of the MFL group has been in enhancing the range and capacities of NGOs for undertaking micro finance and by creating an enabling environment for linkages with government and financial institutions. Specifically ARAVALI's interventions in the micro-finance and livelihood area over the past years have included the following:

- ARAVALI has worked with about 20 NGOs to strengthen their self-help group (SHG) programme and develop them as capable micro-finance organisations. Activities include training of NGO staff on SHG formation/management, information dissemination, providing professional staff and helping them in linkages with banks and other institutions. The FWWB and SRTT have provided support for this programme. As part of an experiment to understand the constraints in implementation ARAVALI started a field level operation in Rajsamand district to support watershed management. Under this programme ARAVALI organised 45 SHGs however ARAVALI now has withdrawn from this project.
- In collaboration with Department of Rural Development, ARAVALI has organised annual state-level consultative workshops on Micro-finance in Rajasthan. At the workshops an attempt was made to understand the existing situation of the MF sector in the state, get an idea of different kind of MF initiatives undertaken in different parts of the country and determine an agenda for promoting MF in the state. ARAVALI has also facilitated studies on micro-insurance and best practices in micro-finance.
- A comprehensive study was undertaken to examine the status of rural livelihoods in Rajasthan and to ascertain the opportunities for strengthening it. The study (known as the Aajeevika study) was financially supported by UNDP. In order to capture the diversity of livelihood conditions in the state the study intensively covered four development blocks across the state – each block representing a larger socio-ecological region of Rajasthan. The main research revolved around three questions:
 - How are rural livelihoods changing and diversifying in Rajasthan?
 - What factors determine access to new and productive livelihood opportunities for different categories of the rural population, particularly the poor?
 - What measures can facilitate the rural poor in achieving successful sustainable livelihoods?

Based on the findings of the study ARAVALI has prepared a proposal for a Livelihood Resource Centre (LRC) that will lead innovative thoughts and practices on rural livelihoods in Rajasthan.

ARAVALI's Strengths and Weaknesses in the MFL Sector

ARAVALI's MFL group has put it firmly on the map as a facilitator and player in the NGO based micro finance arena of Rajasthan. In this role ARAVALI has filled an institutional niche. It has contributed by providing capacity building support to NGOs. The annual micro-finance workshops have helped in debating key constraints in MF expansion in the state. The study on micro-insurance has explored interesting options for initiating insurance for the rural poor.

However ARAVALI's choice of activities with regard to capacity building of NGOs has not been particularly strategic. First ARAVALI's canvass is Rajasthan state and working intensively with few NGOs has taken too much of scarce staff time in this direction. SHG linkages with banks has been poor in the state and ARAVALI needed to spend more focussed efforts and time in linking with banks with SHGs. ARAVALI could have played a more strategic role in motivating bankers to increase SHG-Bank linkages.

ARAVALI also has not made enough efforts to develop linkages with existing micro-finance institutions in the country. Linkages are weak with organisations like NABARD, SIDBI and BASIX. Similarly ARAVALI needed to interact and build more stronger and strategic linkages with capable NGOs working in the state of Rajasthan e.g. PEDO, PRADAN

One cause for ARAVALI working at a lower orbit in the MFL unit has been its inability to attract appropriate and experienced staff to match the MFL group's objectives.

While there is something to show for ARAVALI's work in micro finance, a broader livelihood agenda remains still rather limited. Expanding innovation or practice on livelihoods through NGO programmes or collaborative action has yet to take off. The Aajeevika study and the LRC proposals now provide a conceptual ground for promoting the livelihoods of the poor and these need to be put to practice now.

3.1.3 Collaborations and Support Group (CSG)

Collaborations Support Group (CSG) attempts to promote effective collaborations between GOR and NGOs. While all groups of ARAVALI aims to work towards effective collaborations with in their focus area, CSG aims to improve partnerships at a higher, more strategic level. Success here would improve collaborations at the state level and could have significant improvements in the functioning of all major sectors and Government departments. Achieving success here is critical but a difficult and slow process. A summary of activities undertaken by ARAVALI under the CSG group is as follows:

NGO Cell: GOR has set up an NGO Cell to promote “involvement of voluntary organisations in the development process of Rajasthan”. This cell was set up in April 2001 under the chairmanship of Development Commissioner with ARAVALI as its member secretary. The specific objective of the NGO cell is to enhance collaboration between Government and NGOs for development schemes and moving towards institutionalisation of collaborative structures including NGO selection procedures. NGO cell also aims to remove problems that may emerge in such collaborations and take policy decisions related to these. A standing committee of the NGO cell was finalised in January 2003 with membership including NGO representatives, Panchayati Raj Representatives, Secretaries to the Government, Commissioner disabilities and NABARD. Till date two meetings of the NGO Cell have taken place.

District Level Monitoring: Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has started a pilot project of monitoring its schemes at the district level through independent agencies in 60 districts in the country. The central government has identified ARAVALI to conduct the independent district level monitoring of its schemes in three districts Ajmer, Nagaur and Sikar districts in Rajasthan. The purpose of this initiative is to get timely and objective information on the status of the implementation of the schemes at the field level. The specific objectives of this assignment are: to maintain flow of reliable and authentic information from district to the centre; to look for an appropriate policy environment at the district level; to do the physical verification of the assets and/or beneficiaries created and benefited.

Drought Information and Support Cell (DISC): Rajasthan suffered a very severe drought in 2002. As it was 4th consecutive drought year, its impact on human, animals and natural resources was the worst. Both the government and many NGOs felt that ARAVALI should act as an information resource centre on drought management. ARAVALI, with the support from UNDP, set up a Drought Information and Support Cell (DISC). The Cell collected information on the ground realities on drought through the NGOs and provided it to the Government in order for government to guide its relief operation accordingly. The DISC provided the copies of the government orders on relief to the NGOs so that they could further take it to people and demand the relief as per government policy and orders. A monthly newsletter “AKAAL TIMES” in Hindi was published and four workshops of media persons were conducted to promote better reporting on drought. The gaps in BPL selection were compiled and a study conducted on preparedness of farmers for *kharij* season and funding organisations were linked to NGOs in Baran district for drought relief. ARAVALI attempted to make DISC an open forum for support in information collection, collation and analysis to add on to the efforts of all concerned with drought such as NGOs, peoples’ fronts, academicians, donors and Government.

ARAVALI’s Strengths and Weaknesses in Collaboration Support

ARAVALI has built a good database of NGOs in the state that has been frequently used both by Government and funding organisations. ARAVALI is frequently called upon to advise the state agencies and donors on how they can best work with NGOs of the state. Many departments now approach ARAVALI for information and listings of NGOs who they wish to involve in their schemes and projects. There is a frequent demand for ARAVALI to help in NGO selection and contacts at the district level. In a number of cases ARAVALI has organised and participated in consultations between government and NGOs for dissemination or designing of new programme structures. A number of donors to NGOs and GOs also regularly visit ARAVALI in order to discuss new programmes and seek inputs on NGO participation.

Collaboration has been a tough agenda to manage given the imbalances that exist in NGO capacity on one hand and adversity in GO policies and procedures for NGO participation on the other. Many attempts at facilitating dialogue and convergence can be frustrating because of changes in personnel or improper and arbitrary mechanisms. Yet ARAVALI has emerged as a platform for such a dialogue, a forum that is seen as reasonably neutral by NGOs and as a non-partisan facility for the Government to reach and work with NGOs.

The recent setting up of a high-powered NGO Cell by the government with ARAVALI as its convenor is perhaps the best gain of ARAVALI’s efforts at institutionalising NGO participation in the state departments and agencies. Unfortunately the fledgling NGO cell is falling in neglect because of poor interest in meetings and difficulties in co-ordination. ARAVALI has not been able to bring to NGO cell the visibility and significance it seemed to merit.

The involvement of ARAVALI with district level monitoring of centrally sponsored scheme is an indicator of ARAVALI’s acceptance even at the central government level. This has also increased ARAVALI’s knowledge base about large number of programmes in districts where monitoring is being done. At the district level ARAVALI was able to mobilise collaborative action during the drought emergency and the Drought Information and Support Centre (DISC) was well received. Even so ARAVALI realises that it has not used its involvement with district level monitoring more strategically. This was possible by holding state and district level workshop to discuss findings, by

increasing strategic presence at the central level, which could indirectly grow ARAVALI's effectiveness at the state level; by increasing its knowledge base about how projects are performing in rest of India etc.

ARAVALI also recognises that it has not been able to use well its own bodies like the Governing Council and Executive Committee more effectively to achieve its mandate. First not many meetings have been held and second the boundaries between GOs and NGOs are still too strong to push GO-NGO agenda through at an increased pace.

3.1.4 Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement (HICE)

ARAVALI believes that lack of capacities in development organisation is a major constraint to the growth of the development sector and poverty eradication in Rajasthan. The ARAVALI's HICE group has experimented with various approaches to capacity building ranging from customised, intensive, handholding type associations to providing one-off training inputs for multiple organisations. ARAVALI has also designed innovative programmes for trained professionals to be placed with NGOs for a specific period of time. Realising the information gap amongst NGOs, ARAVALI has made available information on new developments to NGOs in the form of a monthly newsletter and bulletins. Specifically the following activities have been undertaken under the HICE group:

Comprehensive Support Action Plan (COSAP): In recognition of the fact that one-off and isolated support has limitations and to be more effective more comprehensive support to the partners needs to be provided. In other words this means that ARAVALI should look at the partner as 'complete organisation' rather than as 'programme partner'. Keeping this in mind ARAVALI designed a Support Assessment Framework (SAF) to ascertain the specific support requirement of a partner. Based on the identified issues COSAP for partner organisations was prepared. COSAP is a systematic, time-bound, and logical plan of action towards building the institutional capacities of NGOs. COSAP defines the responsibilities of NGO as well as of ARAVALI to be taken up as planned, through an agreement. It has broadly two modes of support:

- **In-house trainings** on various identified issues, in which three senior functionaries of each partner participate. They share these issues with other members of their respective teams and work out strategy to incorporate the learning into their works.
- **On location support** as the follow up process, under which functionaries of ARAVALI or a consultant would visit the organisation and its field to ensure effective process in line with the requirements.

There are certain 'minimum partner criteria' that the partner organisation has to fulfil to qualify for this support. Presently ARAVALI is working with 40 organisations in this mode.

Professional Assistance for Voluntary Agencies (PAVA): PAVA programme addresses the major problems of shortage of professionally qualified human resources in small and medium sized NGOs. ARAVALI initiated the PAVA programme in 1999. Under this programme ARAVALI helps partner organisations in identification and recruitment of suitable young professionals from reputed organisations. ARAVALI provides orientation and exposure to these interns 50% of their salary to the partner organisations. Till now 32 interns have been trained and placed.

Social Analysis and Management Development Programme (SAMDP): SAMDP is an intensive, residential management programme conducted by ARAVALI for NGO personnel in Rajasthan. The course was started in 2001-2 and so far three batches involving 62 participants from 4 organisations have been trained. The programme is divided into nine modules and is conducted in two phases of 20 days each. The SAM-DP fills the long felt need for upgrading the management and analytical skills of senior NGO staff with considerable experience.

ARAVALI Training Support Fund (ATSF): Small NGOs lack training opportunities often due to lack of funds and information. ATSF is a small fund that sponsors individuals to attend training and workshops for enhancing their understanding and skills on specific subjects. ATSF was initiated in the year 2000-1 with and it provides an average support of Rs 5000 to applicants.

ARAVALI Development Features Service (ADFS): ADFS shares the important experiences and learning which are relevant for the organisational works of NGOs and other stakeholders. ADFS is circulated to around 175 NGOs, 15 donors, 15 Government departments working in the field of development in the field of development, every month.

Special Professional Assistance Programme (SPAP): SPAP supports small organisations for hiring specialised staff services that they cannot otherwise access. Organisations may be supported for specific needs such as project development, staff capacity building, project planning and documentation and the support can be used for hiring short term consultants or professionals for a designated task.

Flexi Funds: The fund is aimed at addressing problems of such small NGOs which have innovative ideas to be tried but do not have funds. To encourage such innovations this programme provides support up to an extent of Rs. 50,000.

ARAVALI's Strengths and Weaknesses in HICE

Like in the MF sector ARAVALI is filling a niche role in the area of capacity enhancement and institutional growth of NGOs in the state. It has designed a diverse set of packages and programmes to cater to the under served small and medium sized NGOs. ARAVALI has established a good record for itself in this important domain and there is continuous demand by NGOs to provide more intensive support and by newer NGOs to be linked to this support. More importantly because of various initiatives taken by ARAVALI on training NGO staff and recruiting professionals from outside for the under served NGO sector in Rajasthan there is an overall increase in the number of professionals coming into the sector. One case in point is ARAVALI starting with recruitment of professionals from Xavier Institute of Social Sciences (XISS), Ranchi four years before for employing in ARAVALI and for placing with NGOs under the PAVA programme. Now XISS serves as a major source of professionals for the development sector in Rajasthan.

ARAVALI's main client has been small sized NGOs where their services have contributed in more effective development administration in the state but ARAVALI has not been able to reach out to larger and well established NGOs. This is because of two reasons. First ARAVALI has deliberately focussed more on reaching out to relatively smaller NGOs who have difficulty in accessing both funds and human resources. Second larger NGOs might feel that support provided by ARAVALI does not add enough value to their work. ARAVALI should consider putting in more effort in

building credibility and trust from these larger sets of NGOs. Similarly start up NGOs remains outside the purview of ARAVALI. This is an important task and support required by these NGOs would be of a different kind e.g. in deciding geographic and sectoral focus, mentoring support and most importantly fund raising support. In future ARAVALI may consider some kind of incubation fund for these NGOs.

Problems are however arising in the duplication of capacity building support from different groups within ARAVALI. While this is the main area for HICE group, the NRM and MFL groups also provide capacity building support to their partners without necessarily drawing upon HICE. This creates complexity in terms of administration and management of the capacity building process. The complexity is also created due to funding sources e.g. SRTT project on micro-finance. The projects have outputs on growth of micro-finance but inputs are mainly on capacity building which are provided both by MFL group for technical skills and by HICE group on general functions like perspective building, improving accounting system, proposal development and fund raising etc. This has created confusion between MFL and HICE groups and potentially can create confusion between other units. Lack of communication between the two units (MFL and HICE) has not helped either.

3.1.5 Major Issues and Challenges

ARAVALI's huge focus on capacity building has put **enormous pressure on small but dedicated work force** of ARAVALI. At the same time the demand for ARAVALI's services are increasing at a frantic pace. These demands are coming from GOR, NGOs and also from donor agencies. Prioritisation is difficult but important. ARAVALI has not been able to match up increasing demand for its services with staff recruitment. As a result the required attention has not been given to some important tasks e.g. policy research and policy dialogue, spending quality time with experienced NGOs and building rapport with these institutions. ARAVALI has to handle this extremely carefully, as it seems to be focussing on urgent issues rather than focussing on important ones.

ARAVALI has also made efforts in initiating policy dialogue between the Government and NGOs but it plays an unusual and often difficult role acting as an interface between the two. The relationship is under constant re-negotiation as ARAVALI deals with the discretion and preferences of frequently changing Government staff and opinions of NGOs.

There is a perception amongst certain NGOs that ARAVALI is closer to the Government and it does not raise real contentious issues facing organisations in the field. Some of these issues are e.g. low participation of NGOs in the watershed programme, various issues on the state of JFM implementation and currently the ongoing DPIP programme. Many NGOs do recognise that ARAVALI cannot take extremely conflicting position vis-à-vis Government because of its structure. However if ARAVALI does not raise any major issue there is a danger of ARAVALI losing its relevance especially with regard to its objective of enhancing GO-NGO collaboration. On the other hand if it does take a confrontational approach the demand of its services from government might go down again undermining its mandate. The challenge is to find the right balance.

3.1.6 Issues for perspective plan

Some of the questions that face ARAVALI at this important juncture include:

1. What should be the core sectors in which ARAVALI should focus for next 5 years, its rationale and role in each sector?
2. What should be the appropriate strategy for scaling out to larger number of NGOs, particularly those working in distant areas? More specifically, ARAVALI is not able to cater to the needs of so many NGOs working in state. Should ARAVALI have regional/district offices or should it be building alliances with capable NGOs and developing them as regional resource centres?
3. ARAVALI has been working with NGOs intensively which takes considerable efforts and time resulting in ARAVALI not reaching out to many other organisations. Should ARAVALI focus more on extensive nature of support like information dissemination to large number of NGOs, more policy related issues, generic-training programmes etc?
4. The capacity enhancement work is more effective when the NGOs are implementing programmes. However many organisations are constantly facing financial crunch. Till now ARAVALI has not been involved in grant making and ARAVALI has had limited focus on mobilising financial resources for partner NGOs. Should ARAVALI be addressing the issue of lack of financial resources' for NGOs more directly as a funding channel?
5. How should ARAVALI be structured given that there are multiple and overlapping roles between groups and teams?

It is these questions that this Perspective Plan seeks to answer in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4

ARAVALI's Vision, Mandate and Strategies

ARAVALI's future roles and strategies are derived from an analysis of developments in the GO – NGO arena of Rajasthan, and assessment of ARAVALI's growth and programme experiences and finally on the expectations articulated by a wide range of stakeholders in the state. In sum this perspective plan exercise reiterates the existing ARAVALI's dual mandate of **enriching GO NGO collaboration** and **strengthening NGO capacities**. In order to fulfil these mandates, ARAVALI's strategies will include (a) support to innovative field programmes; (b) expansion of outreach and regionalisation; (c) knowledge generation and research; (d) institutionalisation and (e) partnerships.

4.1 ARAVALI's Mandate

The two priority mandates that ARAVALI will continue to pursue rigorously through the perspective plan period are:

- **Enhancing the quality of GO NGO collaboration for development.**
- **Strengthening NGO capacities for improving the sector's vision, practice and credibility.**

As such ARAVALI will weigh the potential to contribute to these mandates in the selection of all its projects and programmes. The implication is that all such offers and proposals for institutional engagement that do need not *directly* meet one or both of the above will be considered low priority for ARAVALI.

4.1.1 GO NGO Collaboration

ARAVALI recognizes that the reality of GO – NGO collaboration in the state continues to be a constantly shifting one. ARAVALI remains convinced of the merits of GO and NGO partnership while better appreciating the many policy and pragmatic difficulties of actually operationalising collaborations. Over the past years it has been witness to, and indeed, has played a part in the formulation of a number of collaborative initiatives. It has also seen several initiatives become defunct while many struggle to survive. Stable arrangements between GOs and NGOs are yet to become common and attitudes towards NGOs, particularly among government officials at lower rungs, remain coloured with mistrust.

Over the coming PP period, ARAVALI will strive to build new opportunities in GO NGO partnerships as well as help improve those existing within the sectors of its concern. GO NGO collaboration will be a cross cutting agenda that will inform many of ARAVALI's projects and programmes. ARAVALI's efforts will not be restricted to collaborative opportunities within specific development projects but will also be directed to the improvement of Government and NGO relations more broadly and qualitatively.

In its search and selection of projects for implementation, ARAVALI will be guided by the potential in these for collaborative action between government and NGOs. ARAVALI recognizes that this will need more intensive efforts at the divisional and district levels, and possibly even

lower, in order to play an effective facilitative role. Further ARAVALI will locate into more strategic niches in departments and agencies in order to wield more influence for its monitoring and facilitating role.

4.1.2 Enhancing NGO capacities

ARAVALI reiterates its core commitment to building a robust NGO sector in Rajasthan and it will expand its multiple efforts in this direction. ARAVALI's institutional and programme intervention will aim to improve governance, professional competence, human capital and systems for not only better performance but also for greater credibility. Having a reasonably large base of contacts and partnerships with NGOs across the state ARAVALI is well seized of the trends in the NGO movement of Rajasthan and the challenges that face different kinds and categories of organizations. Across all manner of organizations however, the human asset base remains inadequate in proportion to the complex, professionally demanding and often changing tasks of development work. As mainstream NGOs become more and more, rather than less, dependent on external donors, the requirements of planning, implementation, monitoring, fund raising, systems and organizational processes have become more pressing.

ARAVALI has seen the alarming attrition in the credibility of the NGO sector because of opportunistic mushrooming and rampant malpractices being reported in the context of selected government projects. There is little to justify these developments in the sector and there is little to measure the damage and divisions this is causing to, and within, the NGO sector.

It is these on-going gaps, which ARAVALI will address as a priority through the coming 5-year period. It will devise and implement new interventions in the human and institutional capacities of the sector. Through its programmes it will deliberately increase its outreach to areas and organizations that are currently underserved. It will also invest in long-term partnerships with others in order to institutionalise its capacity building interventions as a permanent resource to the state.

4.2 Strategies

ARAVALI will use a judicious combination of the following strategies in order to realize its mandates:

4.2.1 Support to Sectoral Initiatives

While ARAVALI will not be a primary field implementation organisation it will provide comprehensive technical and managerial support to programmes of Government and NGOs in the following two sectors:

- Natural Resource Management with emphasis on rain-fed farming, irrigation and drought management in underserved pockets of poverty concentration.
- Rural livelihood development with particular focus on micro finance, non-farm and services sector development and labour enhancement.

ARAVALI's choice of NRM and Livelihood is based first and foremost on the significance of these sectors in alleviating rural poverty in Rajasthan. Many innovations and alternatives are as yet

needed to address the hard issues of resource management, livelihood, employment and poverty. While many NGO engage directly in these sectors there is still a dearth of institutional support for building their capacities particularly in these sectors. There is a good potential for expanding and enriching GO NGO collaboration in these areas. Finally ARAVALI's own techno-managerial competence in these areas of NRM and livelihood is stronger than in others.

What would be the ARAVALI's sectoral support to development agencies? This will include a) new project formulation and planning; b) research and technical assistance; c) resource mobilization and d) networking and liaison support.

ARAVALI has so far avoided acting as a fund conduit agency for smaller NGOs with limited access to resources however it now appears now necessary to make a substantial move in the direction of closing the funding gap. ARAVALI proposes to establish a **Grant Management Unit** within the next two years, which will mobilise and administer resources for specific sectoral interventions through NGOs.

It needs to be noted that the sectoral support (a – d above) will not be restricted to NGOs alone but also to government agencies or institutions that wish to formulate new programmes and projects that intervene in a critical sector and also aim to engage NGOs in their operationalisation.

It also needs to be clarified that ARAVALI's intensive involvement with NRM and Livelihood does not mean that it will exclude all engagement with other sectors. ARAVALI's mandate in enhancement of GO NGO collaboration implies that it can cover other sectors as well

4.2.2 Knowledge generation and research

ARAVALI will strengthen its research capability and in the coming perspective plan period aim to become the facilitator of on-going quality development research and study outputs. The strategic purposes of this are several, the most significant being the need to dynamically contribute to development practice and policy in the state. The other important purpose is to provide a broader platform for dissemination of innovations, best practices and experiences across organizations. A strong research function will also help ARAVALI in identifying potential areas for intervention as well as make available valuable information to others.

4.2.3 Expansion of Outreach and Regionalisation

In view of rapid proliferation and concentration of NGOs in pockets across the state ARAVALI will rapidly expand its own presence in districts such as Udaipur and Jodhpur, both of which are now hub of large number of agencies and projects. This expansion will facilitate greater ground contact with organizations and offer more multifarious opportunities in strengthening local collaborations between government departments, projects and local NGOs.

4.2.4 Institutionalisation

ARAVALI will move towards increased institutionalisation of its activities through new organizational arrangements and initiatives. This will ensure greater sustainability and specialization which otherwise is not possible in a multi-support organisation like ARAVALI. In the coming years ARAVALI will be playing a key role in promotion of new organizations and

structures for carrying out longer term specialized mandates especially in the area of livelihood promotion, capacity building for development practice and resource mobilization.

Chapter 5

Priority Services, Sectors and Interventions Areas

This chapter sets out the priority sectoral areas and programmes to which ARAVALI will apply itself in the coming 5-year period. The priorities are derived from the preceding situation analysis of the development issues and institutions in the state as well as the roles and strategies defined in Chapter 4.

ARAVALI's core services will include:

- Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement
- Collaboration and Networking
- Research and Knowledge Building

The principal sectors that ARAVALI will undertake field support and action include:

- Natural Resources Management
- Livelihood and Employment

5.1 ARAVALI's Core Services

5.1.1 Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement

ARAVALI will continue to pursue the agenda of building human and institutional capacities for more effective practice and performance in development agencies. ARAVALI's human and institutional capacity enhancement services will be aimed at advancing good governance, strengthening leadership values as well as increasing techno-managerial competence at all levels.

ARAVALI recognizes that the NGO movement and its constituent organizations continue to function with many limitations of staff and systems' capacities. Barring a few organizations that can provide the resources and the professional environment, well-trained, competent professionals are not attracted to rural NGOs. NGOs thus tend to be staffed by local, often well meaning but poorly trained individuals with limited capacities. The capacity challenge does not just occur at middle or lower rungs of the organizations – many organizations are in fact formed and led by individuals with modest techno-managerial competence.

ARAVALI will move towards institutionalising its capacity building services and activities in order to *transform and create a growing pool of motivated, informed and trained personnel to serve development institutions and projects in the state. It will also pro-actively assist with processes and structures leading to better governance, greater credibility and transparency in the NGO sector.*

ARAVALI will support the following initiatives under its HICE services:

Academy for training rural development practitioners: ARAVALI will facilitate setting up an academy of development practitioners in Rajasthan with a view to provide a stream of young, trained personnel to NGOs, development projects and agencies. The Academy will offer, organise

and run courses and programmes for in-career personnel as well as undergraduate level youth interested in a rural development career.

In order to move towards this filling this personnel and capacity gap, ARAVALI will explore the possibility of collaborating with existing Schools of Social Work or Institutions with infrastructure, academic experience and interest in expanding their academic portfolio to include rural development and management studies and specialised courses.

Short-term training and capacity building modules for NGO personnel: ARAVALI will continue to organise the SAM-DP (Social Analysis and Management Development Programme) aimed at equipping NGO functionaries with skills and tools of social analysis and management. A recent review has confirmed the immense popularity as well as relevance of this programme. The review has made a number of pragmatic recommendations in order to improve the programme's outreach and impact and ARAVALI will act upon these in the immediate future.

Strategic Planning and Management Support to NGOs: Under a comprehensive support package known as COSAP, ARAVALI has provided multi-level support to selected organisations across the state. This has included help in developing perspective plans, improving systems, formulating management policy and providing somewhat customised services. In the coming period ARAVALI will begin to focus on providing more strategic services to NGOs as opposed to attempting very specific and customised operational assistance. ARAVALI recognises that the "intensive mode" is quite important for helping institutional transformation however given ARAVALI's own location and mandate it is best suited to provide services at a more strategic and extensive plane. The strategic services will include providing technical assistance in formulation of future plans / perspective plans, undertaking specific studies and research for helping in NGO's programme design, undertaking selective dissemination, media support and publicity of NGOs' activities or successes that can have a wider bearing. ARAVALI will also develop and offer workshops and training courses in strategic planning and management of NGOs.

Resource mobilisation and funding support: ARAVALI recognises that timely and sensible funding support for small, localised organisations is a pressing need and demand of the NGO sector. The lack of such funding becomes the source of opportunism and compromise for many agencies as well as an impediment to their growth.

ARAVALI has itself largely avoided a funding or channelling role for NGOs except under extraordinary circumstances like drought. The held view is that playing a funding role changes the character of relationship with the NGOs as well as places a disproportionately large grant management burden on ARAVALI. While this is still likely to generate debate within ARAVALI and its NGO networks, the perspective plan proposes that ARAVALI will enter a formal grant mobilisation and management role.

As a start up of activities the Grant Management Unit in the more immediate future will provide assistance to an annually selected group of agencies for *project planning, grant writing and donor negotiations*. The selection of such organisations will be based on a careful criteria combining need, competence, integrity and development opportunity thus represented. ARAVALI will start setting up the Unit as a subsidiary agency within the next 3 years. The role of Grant Management Unit will be to act as a funding intermediary acting responding to requests from donors / department to act as a funding node and proactively raising funds in order to bridge specific funding gaps among NGOs.

The Grant Management Unit will also play a proactive and systematic role in improving donor – NGO interface in the state more widely. This implies the setting up of more dialogue forums, input to donors through research and commentary and facilitation of network programmes. ARAVALI will be willing to share information and experiences with donors wherever there is a good potential to link them with local organizations and projects.

During the perspective plan period ahead, ARAVALI's Grant Management Unit will proceed with setting up of an innovation and leadership fund (amounting to Rs 20 lakhs annually) for individual fellowships, awards and bridge grants to young and promising organizations. The fund can be used strategically to promote thematic or sectoral innovation or NGO activity in under-served areas or even provide impetus to promising leaders.

Within 2005 ARAVALI will commission and complete a feasibility plan study for setting up the Grant Management Unit as a subsidiary / affiliate organisation.

Providing Development Professionals to NGOs: Professional Assistance to Voluntary Action (PAVA) has been an important signature programme for ARAVALI. It has provided a number of small organizations the opportunity to avail services of trained development professionals while also affording them a remarkable chance to learn and adjust to the realities of development work in NGOs. There have of course been issues related to retention of professionals and their compatibility with local organisational cultures. Attrition rates and turnover remains high thus diluting learning and contribution on either side.

Keeping in mind these experiences, ARAVALI will review this programme. We will focus on building local, in-situ competence and generally improving the supply of well trained professionally equipped development practitioners within the state.

5.1.2 GO NGO Collaboration and Liaison Support

As its core mandate, ARAVALI will continue to work towards improving the climate of Government and NGO relations and collaboration in Rajasthan. ARAVALI was conceived as a specialized facility to promote collaborative development action in the state and it is in this area that its energies will need renewal and reinvestment in the coming 5-year perspective plan period. As noted in Chapter 3 the political and bureaucratic environment surrounding GO-NGO relations has remained sluggish and often adverse. ARAVALI is thus entering its next perspective plan with significantly more experience, skills and an understanding of what is feasible to achieve in advancing GO-NGO collaboration.

ARAVALI's collaboration related programmes and services will build upon the recent creation of an NGO cell in the government and the recent policy moves for formalizing and smoothening NGO participation in government departments both at the state level and locally. ARAVALI will strive for a larger and more decisive advisory role in relation to state agencies and projects that have to engage with NGOs. It will continue to provide design inputs and planning assistance to new and innovative projects that seek large scale NGO participation in their implementation.

Strengthening NGO Cell: The recent creation of the NGO cell by the Government of Rajasthan with ARAVALI as its member secretary has opened several new possibilities of expanding and

streamlining NGO participation across a range of government agencies. The NGO cell is envisaged to have a number of critical pro-collaboration functions and in a way these are fairly co-terminus with those envisaged by ARAVALI for itself.

Though administrative orders for this important cell do exist, its activities have to be fully operationalised, particularly at the district level where GO – NGO – PRI forums are proposed. ARAVALI will take the lead in activating these forums in a few districts on a pilot basis through its proposed regional offices. These forums will provide the opportunity for discussing on-going programmes, planning new collaborative initiatives, debating policy moves, reviewing and monitoring new ventures and sharing experiences across a wide range of departmental interventions. ARAVALI can take the lead in convening these forums will local ownership being built up for long term continuity and dialogue.

It is ARAVALI's move closer to the ground (viz through setting up offices in two regions – Udaipur and Jodhpur) that will create more favourable conditions for advancing dialogue and collaboration at an operational level. The challenges of making collaboration work at that level are also considerable, particularly since earlier experiences elsewhere in creation of GO NGO forums have not been particularly inspiring. Yet there are many opportunities offered by a well-organized GO NGO forum at the district level and ARAVALI will work towards realizing these well in the near term.

One service that has indeed begun in ARAVALI but needs to be made actively available is that of **NGO database**. Another is to activate a **Grievance Redress Mechanism** for resolving conflicts between Government and NGOs in relation to their collaborative programmes and activities.

NGO Certification: ARAVALI has frequently been asked to “grade” or “index” NGOs by government departments and projects that elicit NGO involvement. Many suggestions from within the NGO sector have also been made to set up a rating for organizations in order to establish some distinction between serious minded agencies with high integrity and those that are corrupt and incompetent. In the perspective plan period under review ARAVALI will launch some form of certification or rating system under its own aegis. This certification or rating system will be designed in a way to reflect a wholly objective, fact based assessment of organizations' governance and growth.

ARAVALI realizes that this is a sensitive and potentially divisive move, even though its importance is more compelling than ever before. In order for this to become a credible system it must have a broad support (not necessarily consensus) and recognition from NGOs, donors and government. ARAVALI will soon begin consultations and possibly a study, leading to the design of a system to be launched by mid-2006.

Advisory and designing services for innovative government or donor projects: ARAVALI will continue to respond to the requests of government departments and donors to help them conceptualise or streamline the “NGO components” of their projects. ARAVALI has often been called upon provided inputs to such projects (e.g. DPIP) and this has been used well in terms of designing selection criteria, identifying suitable NGO roles, and implementation structures, developing review and monitoring mechanisms in these projects. As NGO participation becomes a more common feature, particularly of externally aided projects in the state, the relevance of ARAVALI's advisory services in this area becomes very evident. Thus ARAVALI will continue to

provide “NGO-inputs” to projects and it will do so within a broad range of sectors, not just its own core sectors of NRM and Livelihoods.

ARAVALI is aware that playing only a limited consultative role in the implementation of a large project can sometimes be counter-productive because of little control over how collaborative structures and processes *actually* get operationalised. ARAVALI will make a considered judgment of how effective it can be in relation to a collaborative project /initiative and will be willing to forsake an involvement if it is likely to be only partial and not likely to substantially influence the quality of NGO participation in the project.

At the same time ARAVALI will also continue to keep vigil on the environment for new opportunities to improve GO-NGO interface and participation in sectors where it does not yet exist or it exists poorly. For example a number of UN supported initiatives in public sanitation and reproductive health in the state have been designed with high NGO participation for their operationalisation. ARAVALI’s contact with these initiatives has been low, despite the large number of NGOs these involve. Similarly in the power sector there is a move to invite NGOs to build consumer awareness for improving distribution efficiency. ARAVALI can make available its experience, information and contacts to the departments and agencies that are looking for involving NGOs.

Intensify and improve collaboration in selected sectors: The two sectors in which ARAVALI proposes to intensively focus its work – namely **Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods** – continue to represent high potential for collaborative action. As the review of ARAVALI’s work in these sectors suggests, there is a need to open fronts in terms of partnerships and also offer sharper research insights into what needs to be done by government and NGOs for improving development outputs.

Cross Learning, Information Sharing and Immersion: ARAVALI maintains that a large number of problems between government officials and NGO personnel have their source in mistaken perceptions and attitudes based on lack of mutual exposure. ARAVALI will facilitate creative processes of cross learning and exposure between government and NGO personnel by organizing visits, assisting with deputation arrangements and conducting special learning and sharing events. The use of briefs, quick and well-presented and published case studies and other IEC material can enrich positive images and mutual professional appreciation. ARAVALI will invest in these intensively. ARAVALI will also start a **Collaboration Update** as a running chronicle of collaborative activities across the state. This will be a limited circulation documentation covering news, analysis and debates on a wide spectrum of collaboration and partnerships.

5.1.3 Research and Knowledge Building (RE-KNOW)

ARAVALI is frequently called upon to offer advice and inputs to Government, NGOs and donor organisation. The issues have been diverse and important and have included assessment of key development priorities in different areas and sectors, design of new programmes, status of implementation of ongoing programmes, mechanisms to enhance GO-NGO collaboration, assessment of best practices etc. In addition to ARAVALI’s own needs there is a large unmet need for providing quality research outputs to development organisations including GOs, NGOs and donors operating in Rajasthan.

In this proposed perspective plan period ARAVALI will set up a new Research and Knowledge Building (RE-KNOW) service. This service will undertake or facilitate research and studies on demand by ARAVALI's other groups. Also it will proactively identify new relevant areas that require research for policy and practice interventions. The RE-KNOW desk will take forward the outputs and make them available and actionable by stakeholders.

Specifically the functions of the RE-KNOW service would be:

Knowledge base on key priority sectors and emerging new development sectors: ARAVALI's knowledge base has deepened in key sectors such as watershed, agriculture, forests, micro-finance. RE-KNOW will add to this knowledge base and add to it new levels and loops. In addition it will undertake studies on sectors such as micro-insurance, drought, ground water management, potential for PIM, status of GO-NGO collaboration, potential of NGO-PRI interface etc and place its outputs in wider domains.

Defining policy dialogue and practice agenda: The RE-KNOW will conduct regular research on existing programmes and discuss the findings in GO-NGO forums both at the state and district levels. ARAVALI's experience (with watershed and JFM programme) has been that when policy dialogue is backed up with field based research and data, the chances of changes in design or implementation processes are better. This needs to be further strengthened. Examining critically the on-going programmes also affords a precious opportunity to reorient or change programme design.

Studies for Priority Setting and Innovations: Both GOR and donors are continuously calling on ARAVALI to undertake studies for priority setting, programme design or monitoring and impact assessments. These studies could be internal or commissioned by GOR or donor agencies. RE-KNOW will thus help in identifying potential areas for intervention and provide directions to stakeholders and implementers for guiding their own programmes. Through this ARAVALI can more systematically respond to requests for studies and research on a consultancy basis.

Broad platform for dissemination of innovations, best practices and experiences: ARAVALI is realising that while a fair bit is being done at the field level, it is not being captured for learning and replication. ARAVALI has started a monthly two pager called "*Pahal Logon Ki*".(Community Initiatives) that documents the success stories in NRM and disseminates them widely amongst development practitioners. This initiative has been well received and ARAVALI would continue this initiative. ARAVALI will also continue its development feature service (ADFS), which is received well and widely. These services will be now fully housed within the RE-KNOW desk.

5.2 ARAVALI's Core Sectors

The perspective plan exercise indicates that Management of Natural Resources and broader rural livelihoods will comprise the core sectors for ARAVALI. In relation to these two sectors, ARAVALI will apply its core services most intensively and its sectoral work will include:

- Build NGO capacities for building new models or up scaling existing ones with a view to maximise impact and coverage.
- Promote ground level pilot action in GO and NGO settings in new and promising areas that have not been attempted in the past and have the potential of being scaled up.
- Facilitate greater and qualitatively better GO–NGO interaction / collaboration.
- Undertake or support research in critical sectoral areas.

5.2.1 Natural Resource Management (NRM)

Given the precarious nature of population's livelihood on precarious returns from land and livestock in arid and semi arid regions; the huge and recurrent risk of drought, and the compelling scope for improving institutions for NRM as well for collaborative programme and policy action, Natural Resource Management will continue to be a core sector for ARAVALI.

Within the NRM domain, ARAVALI will provide services and support the following specific components:

- Improvements in productivity and returns from rain-fed agriculture.
- Enhancing water use efficiency and intensifying small irrigation coverage.
- Integrated watershed management.
- Forestry
- Drought distress management.

At this time ARAVALI's main NRM projects include a wide array within the SCALE and the UNDP supported initiative in Ajmer district. These will continue well through the coming perspective plan period and an attempt will be made to rationalise the activities in line with the renewed emphasis on attending to gaps, influencing policy and enhancing collaboration within the purview of these projects. To achieve above ARAVALI would take following steps to enhance the effectiveness of its current programme:

- As mentioned in **Chapter 3** within the NRM sector ARAVALI had focused on building capacity of small and medium sized NGOs. ARAVALI will continue to provide these services albeit with a renewed different approach. ARAVALI will reduce its direct capacity building activities and will concentrate on activities of strategic importance for the NRM sector e.g. enhancing GO-NGO collaboration and policy research and dialogue.
- ARAVALI will work towards maintaining and strengthening its contacts in Rural Development and Watershed Departments and will build similar contacts in departments of irrigation, agriculture and animal husbandry. ARAVALI will build contacts at district level government officials with the help of regional offices and the district GO-NGO networks.

- ARAVALI would actively focus on documenting, discussing and disseminating field realities on current NRM projects with GO-NGO focus. This would help in raising relevant issues at the right time and may help in removing bottlenecks in project implementation in the planned manner.

In addition ARAVALI would continue to explore specific new issues that are of high importance and would work towards setting pilots on such issues. As far as possible the pilots would not be housed in ARAVALI but and with NGO or government department or both and where successful separate institutions would be set up. Some of the pilots that have already been identified in Livelihood Resource Centre (LRC) proposal are as follows:

- **Sustainable management of ground water:** The pilot on ground water seeks to set up a project demonstrating user regulation of groundwater through various mechanisms. The rationale for the pilot derives from unregulated extraction of ground water leading to deepening of ground water table and an increase in investments required in pumping up groundwater. The pilot will initiate an awareness process between the user groups leading to voluntary regulation of ground water extraction. State level advocacy will aim at a state-wide act aimed at regulating ground water extraction.
- **Improving returns from Rain-fed Farming in Desert West:** The aim of this pilot is to substantially upgrade returns from rain-fed cultivation undertaken on vast tracts of the desert western Rajasthan. The pilot is based on the evidence that land can continue to provide significant employment in the desert areas provided new and rapid uptake of relevant, environmentally sustainable technologies is required for increasing production. In addition alternate extension models would be needed for remote, desert areas. The pilot will aim to address these gaps in blocks of western Rajasthan.
- **Increasing returns from forestry for rural poor:** The pilot aims to develop forestry as a means of family income for the poorest segments of rural society - the scheduled tribes. Two methods are proposed for this. One is to increase the stakes of the local communities in forest management and second is to explore the possibilities of cultivation of medicinal plants on tribal lands.

A conscious effort would be made to look for more opportunities through research and wider consultations with Government, NGOs and other experts.

5.2.2 Livelihood and Micro Finance (LMF)

The Micro Finance and Livelihood (MFL) Group has thus far focussed on enhancing the capacities of NGOs that have a micro finance portfolio and are working on expanding this to cover larger communities and institutions. As described earlier the focus on livelihood has been limited to undertaking initial studies and formulating proposals for a long-term livelihood involvement. In the coming perspective plan period it is proposed that ARAVALI's livelihood promotion work will assume greater significance and its interventions in the Micro Finance arena will acquire a more institutionalised character. The nomenclature of the MFL group will be modified to Livelihood and Micro Finance (LMF) group in order to underline the precedence of the livelihoods agenda.

Micro Finance Sector

ARAVALI realises that while it holds promise for improving the livelihoods of poor micro finance is an under-performing sector in the state. ARAVALI's activities in the MF sector will remain strongly geared towards stimulating micro finance services and activities and improving NGO capacities and their linkages with financial institutions.

In order to create a longer-term institutional resource ARAVALI will partner with other organisations to set up a **resource centre for micro-finance** in the state. ARAVALI will collaborate more closely with institutions like NABARD, SIDBI and private banks, successful NGOs working in the area of micro-finance.

ARAVALI would support regional resource centres or individuals consultants to provide capacity building to NGOs. ARAVALI would work towards raising funds for up scaling micro-finance activities in the state. These funds would be raised for supporting existing MF organisations, for new organisations that may be required to be set up and for ARAVALI too.

Livelihood Resource Centre (LRC)

ARAVALI's LMF group will work towards the setting up of a **Livelihood Resource Centre (LRC)** within the first two years of the perspective plan period. The purpose of the LRC will be to promote livelihood opportunities and innovations in the **non-farm and services sector** for the rural poor. The LRC will operate as a starting point and location for ground experiments and pilots in hitherto untested and innovative areas that hold promise for livelihood of the rural poor. The LRC will provide initial funding, management inputs, technical support and liaison for new projects. A comprehensive plan for LRC has already been developed and this will be implemented through the perspective plan period. Two of the LRC activities are described here as an illustration of what it will aim to do as a centre of livelihoods in the c

Micro Insurance programme: The intervention seeks to increase the scope of social security measures for the poor. Only a small proportion of society has access to social security measures and coverage of poor is even lower. The study on insurance done by ARAVALI also throws useful pointers to the possibilities of extending insurance for the poor. On the other hand insurance sector is expanding fast and even private insurance companies are looking at the rural poor as a viable market. To begin with ARAVALI would set up a two-member team to work on exploring mechanisms for extending insurance (life, accident and medical) to rural poor. This team would interact with insurance providers both Govt and private organisations, look at other similar experiments in the country, design viable products and if found required would conduct pilots. The first option here would be that the insurance providers themselves get into the operation with NGO supporting at the ground and ARAVALI providing facilitation support.

Upgrading labour and migration opportunities for rural poor: ARAVALI is already supporting Aajeevika Bureau in South Rajasthan on enhancing returns from migration and improving the living conditions of migrants. ARAVALI would be keenly watching progress of this pilot and would continue to support it.

Chapter 6

Institutional Arrangements and Structures

ARAVALI recognises that it will need to refine its organisational structures and processes in order to operationalise the priorities and programmes described in this perspective plan. The following considerations have guided the future thinking in the area of ARAVALI's internal arrangements:

- The need to build a stronger service orientation in ARAVALI's work – ARAVALI needs to develop solid competence in its core areas of capacity building, developing partnerships and research.
- The need to develop stronger inter-team synergies *and* reducing duplication or conflicting mandates between them.
- The need to scale up its services and activities to reach larger number of organisations, linkages and sectors.
- The need to reduce ARAVALI's Jaipur-centricity for becoming a local service provider and facilitator.

ARAVALI's programme team will be essentially organised as Service and Sector groups. There will be three core services:

- Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement (HICE)
- Collaborations and Support Group (CSG)
- Research and Knowledge Generation (RE-KNOW)

And there will be two sectoral groups:

- Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- Livelihood and Micro Finance (LMF)

The services groups will provide inputs and assistance to the programme teams as well as have a broader mandate to serve other NGOs, GOs and donors.

Managing organisational complexity

ARAVALI is moving towards a complex form of organisation required to manage diverse and difficult tasks. The sectoral units would define where to focus on for the services unit while services unit would define how to go about conducting a defined task. Both sector units are closely related to the three services units e.g. NRM unit would seek inputs from all the three services teams on capacity building, enhancing collaboration and on research and knowledge generation while the services units would look forward to sectoral units as knowledge base on defined sectors. ARAVALI would consider working through interdepartmental teams formed to manage specific tasks. The staff would have multiple accountabilities one for the unit leader and for all the teams that they are part of. ARAVALI would look at other organisations of similar kind and look at their structures and experiences.

Regional offices

To start with Regional offices will be set up in two locations with dedicated teams of two to three staff. The teams could possibly be placed under the Collaboration Support Group and these will serve as local nodes for ARAVALI's services and sectoral support. The two locations are Jodhpur and Udaipur.

ARAVALI's Government Linkages

ARAVALI will continue to be housed in the Rural Development department. At the regional level it will be located possibly in a government office and will have close links with district departments and NGOs. ARAVALI has been providing services and support to Government especially on matters relating to GO NGO collaboration and available on call from various departments mostly on a short notice. ARAVALI would continue to provide these services to Government and further consolidate on the gains already made in this direction. Further ARAVALI would focus on increasing contacts in departments such as irrigation, agriculture and animal husbandry.

ARAVALI has been able to raise substantial amount of funds from donor agencies reducing dependence on Government for funds. However ARAVALI would continue to seek at least some funds from Government to keep them interested in ARAVALI's operations. Many continuous years of non-funding from Government may lead to indifference in Government about ARAVALI.

ARAVALI is mainly governed through the executive committee and the governing council with members from the Government and NGOs. ARAVALI would make active efforts to increase the frequency of governing council meetings and increase the quality of participation of NGOs in these meetings. ARAVALI would consider participation of reputed experts/organisations from outside the state in these meetings to bring knowledge from outside the state. These independent experts/organisations can also act as a catalyst for raising more contentious and relevant issues regarding GO NGO collaboration in these meetings.

NGOs' Relations

ARAVALI would make more conscious efforts to build a larger stakes of NGOs in ARAVALI's mandate of enhancing GONGO collaboration and building capacities of NGOs. In this direction ARAVALI would build a small group of confidant NGOs and experts to sound them out, discuss and build prior strategies on key policy where ARAVALI is representing the NGO sector to the Government. This would strengthen ARAVALI's inputs while representing the NGO sector further increase NGO's trust on ARAVALI.

ARAVALI would also start taking periodic joint review of its activities with NGOs on both issues of both capacity building and collaboration enhancement. This would be logically extended to working out joint planning strategies with NGOs. In addition ARAVALI would consciously look for opportunities where NGOs and PRIs can collaborate together.

Donors

As mentioned above ARAVALI has been able to generate interest and funds from large number of donor organisations. ARAVALI would continue to interact more closely with donors and raise more

funds for itself to be able to expand its operations and to carry out activities as planned in this perspective plan. To take care of unpredictable nature of annual funding ARAVALI would also work towards establishing a corpus fund, big enough to take care of its core costs. In addition ARAVALI would act as a catalyst to bring more donor funds in Rajasthan for NGOs and for Government Departments.

Chapter 7

Next steps

This chapter describes the immediate steps being taken by ARAVALI to operationalise the perspective plan. These measures will create necessary conditions for ARAVALI to fully begin work in line with the proposals emerging from this exercise.

Review staff recruitment strategy: ARAVALI is handling extremely complex tasks and needs staff with skills, knowledge, experience, and the right attitude. ARAVALI realises that lack of human resources is the most critical constraints for growth and effectiveness of the development sector. To add to the problem numerous opportunities are available to competent staff and ARAVALI is competing with large number of organisations to recruit these few capable professionals who are motivated by a complex set of factors i.e. remuneration, professional challenge, good work ethics, sensitive, competent and nurturing leadership, potential for future growth etc. ARAVALI would review the current recruitment programme and design a new recruitment plan keeping its future strategy and work plan in mind. ARAVALI would also look at innovative ways to recruit staff e.g. taking staff on deputation from NGOs for limited period. ARAVALI will strive to make sure that lack of professional staff would not define or limit the agenda of its work.

Finalising Organisational Structure and Processes: ARAVALI realises that the tasks taken up by ARAVALI are complex and as recommended in the previous chapters its organisation arrangements are poised for a change. ARAVALI will seek specialised external advice to sharply define its organisational structure and processes within the framework of this perspective plan. This advisory input should help in finalising the organisation structure, viability of working with interdepartmental teams, roles and responsibility of relationships between various departments and teams, performance management of the departments, teams and individual staff.

Task Force for Institutional Diversification: ARAVALI will set up a task force to look at the need, potential and viability of setting up separate institutions within the ambit of this perspective plan. For example the perspective plan suggests possibilities of setting up a separate resource institution for micro-finance in the state, a Livelihood Resource Centre (LRC) and an academy for development practitioners. While these ideas are still at early stages it is important to move ahead on exploring the prospects for these in order to create wider stakes, partnerships and resources for bringing these to fruition.

Consensus on NGO Policy: The review undertaken for this perspective plan suggests that the NGO community is not yet adequately informed or consulted about the draft NGO policy prepared by ARAVALI for GOR. It is extremely important to elicit wider participation and consensus on the proposals of the NGO policy since this comprehensively lays out the road map for GO NGO collaboration in the state.

Sharing Perspective Plan: ARAVALI would share the perspective plan document with Governing Council, Executive Committee other select Govt officials, NGOs and consultants and modify the plan after taking feedback. ARAVALI would also hold discussions at the regional and district level to discuss the functions of regional resource centres.

ARAVALI

Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement

Annex 1 --- Terms of Reference

To initiate the process of preparing ARAVALI's perspective plan for period 2004-08

ARAVALI has a perspective plan for period 1999-2004. It was prepared in 1998-1999. Since then, ARAVALI has made substantial progress in all respects. For example, ARAVALI had a total annual expenditure of about Rs. 10 Lakh, which is now about Rs.120 Lakh. The staff strength has increased from 6 in 1999 to 20 in 2004. Number of programmes, areas of work and number of clients have increased many folds.

ARAVALI has been able to create its own space and a very important role for itself in the development sector in Rajasthan. The government and a number of donor agencies have expressed faith in the work and the capacity of ARAVALI and they have continuously supported ARAVALI. Within a period of 5 years, ARAVALI has stopped taking grant from the state government.

The overall development scenario had also greatly changed since 1999. Now there are some very important development programmes under implementation in the state. For example,

- District Poverty Initiative Programme (DPIP) with total outlay of Rs. 670 crores; Watershed Development Programme (DDP,DPAP,NWDPR, IWDP,Combating Desertification) with approx. outlay of Rs. 1500 crores in 5 years;
- Sector Reform in Drinking Water Sector in 4 districts and a outlay of about Rs. 200 crores;
- Water Sector Reform- Irrigation management with about Rs. 600 crores.
- SGSY for BPL families.
- Swajal dhara, Maru Vikas Yojna, Sam Vikas yojna in two districts, etc.

Interestingly, in all of the above programmes the approach for implementation is more or less similar, the government is ready to limit its role to a facilitator and the community-based organisations are supposed to take up the larger responsibility of programme implementation.

There are many challenges for all of us in the state. Poor state of the implementation of these development programmes has been a matter of concern for the government and others. The capacities of NGOs to take up project implementation of a scale, the capacities of government structure to understand and respond to the ground realities of poor and marginalized, capacities of CBOs and Panchayati Raj Institutions and most important the mechanisms of support to PRIs and VIs, role of private sector and peoples movements in development sector are some of the issues that are crucial for future. ARAVALI has been actively working on some of these issues.

ARAVALI got its evaluation done by a team of experts last year. After consultation with various stakeholders (NGOs, Government, Donors etc.) the experts have suggested the areas where ARAVALI should focus in future.

Therefore, it appears that ARAVALI should now start the process of preparing its perspective plan for coming 5 years. The perspective plan should take the current development scenario in state, it should also analyse the trends, and should build upon the progress made by ARAVALI so far. It should clearly spell out the areas that ARAVALI should be working in future, rationale for working in that area, achievable outputs and suggest the appropriate strategy of intervention.

Independent consultants who have sufficient experience of working in development sector at should prepare it in consultation with ARAVALI's senior staff. It would provide a sort of road map and help us in focus in on some of the matters.

Some of the questions that ARAVALI is facing today and that the perspective plan should address are:

- What should be the appropriate strategy to reach out to NGOs working in distant areas? More specifically, ARAVALI is not able to cater to the needs of so many VOs working in state. Should we have regional/district offices or should we have alliances with capable NGOs and see them as regional resource centres.
- Within the field of 'Capacity Enhancement' what are the areas/ subjects that ARAVALI should focus on?
- We have been working with NGOs in two modes. Intensive Mode- Under this, ARAVALI tend to provide comprehensive support to partner, which includes 'hand holding' if required. It takes considerable efforts and time. Therefore, we are not able to reach out to many partners. Should ARAVALI focus on more extensive nature of support like information dissemination to large number of NGOs, more policy related issues, generic-training programmes etc.?
- The capacity enhancement work is more effective when the NGOs have some ongoing projects/ programmes to use the enhanced skills. ARAVALI has so far nor been involved in grant making. We have neither helped partners (in any significant scale) to mobilize financial resources. Should we in any way address this issue of 'lack of financial resources' for NGOs?
- What should be the core sectors in which ARAVALI should focus for next 5 years, its rationale and role in each sector?
- ARAVALI has been working on 'livelihood' issues of people through Natural Resource Management and Micro finance aspects. But we have not implemented any project/ programme directly with communities. We did a study to understand the change that is taking place in livelihood system of poor in Rajasthan. Based on the study, ARAVALI has also prepared a proposal to pilot some initiatives on livelihood promotion through 'Livelihood Resource Centre'. State government is also increasingly opening up for supporting 'development of informal sectors' to promote livelihood of poor. Being driven by partners needs (both NGO and Government) ARAVALI bears the risk of taking up so many issues and then spreading itself thin on various matters. The perspective plan should a document to guide us to remain focused for some time at least.

The methodology and schedule of the assignment needs to be worked out in consultation with ARAVALI