

Capacity Building of Link Workers With Gender Aspects Included

A Training Manual

Haryana Community Forestry Project

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Acronyms

HCFP	Haryana Community Forestry Project
VRMC	Village Resource Management Committee
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SHG	Self-Help Group
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
INDCARE	Integrated National Development Centre for Advancements Reforms and Education
FSG	Farmer Solidarity Group
BCC	Behavioural Communication Change

Preface

Haryana Community Forestry Project (HCFP) is working towards the development as well as the rejuvenation of the forest resources of Haryana. The project, along with other aspects, involves economic upgradation of the underprivileged section of the villagers. For the success and sustainability of natural resource management, it is important to involve the community and build their capacity in the same. The objective of the upgradation of the underprivileged also calls for this type of participatory activities.

This manual focuses on the roles and responsibilities of Link Workers, with particular reference to the needs of women. Women, either due to lack of awareness, knowledge, education and proper direction or due to the lack of resources, remain underprivileged and are not able to access the existing resources in the area for their upliftment. Though women constitute 1/3 of the VRMC members, their voices are not always heard. Due to irregular income sources and lack of savings, women are unable to access various loan schemes initiated by different organisations. Looking at the need, HCFP commenced the Self-Help Group (SHG) strategy within its activity line. In SHGs, women are motivated and mobilised for their economic development and improved social status.

Keeping in mind the objectives, Haryana Community Forestry Project (HCFP) has played an important role while involving various stakeholders ranging from individuals, communities, local leaders, local bodies etc. and the expertise of various NGOs. With the participation of all these at different points of time, lots of development activities have been initiated. Through these, the project has established an example as to how people from different walks of life can be involved for the overall and sustainable development of the society.

To establish a link with the grassroots level, HCFP introduced a cadre called '*Link Workers*', who belong to the same community but have some distinct qualities in them in relation to the objectives of the project. It was observed that if the Link Workers are trained in a proper manner, they could play a vital role not only for the formation and strengthening of the community groups for the promotion of community forestry and preservation of the same, but also for the sustainability and growth after the withdrawal of the external agencies. This manual would thus provide them with a tool to plan their activities ahead with respect to the implementation of the programme and achieve the desired and effective outcomes, leading to sustainability at the grassroots level, with the active participation of the beneficiaries, both men and women.

This manual tries to highlight the need and the role of the Link Workers in the development of the village while achieving the Haryana Community Forestry Project's objectives. It also provides the direction to share and replicate such experience later on in other areas where people are looking forward to such initiatives. It thus explains the meaning of the Link Workers, while enhancing their capacity through a participatory approach. Along with this training, follow-up training for the Link Workers should make a larger and improved impact in relation to the field operations.

With this, I would sincerely give thanks to HCFP, Project Director Mr. S.K. Dhar and Mr. Goran Jonsson, TA Team Leader, for providing me the opportunity to develop this training manual for strengthening the ongoing programme.

Lastly, I would like to give special thanks to Ms. Priyanka Singh Kakde, Programme Officer, INDCARE. She not only assisted in typing the manual but also played a vital role in testing it at the field level while enhancing the community participation.

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Manual Outline

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This training programme can be scheduled as:

	Time	Particulars
Day 1	10:00 am – 10:15 am	Registration
	10:15 am – 11:30 am	Introduction: Matching and Batching
	11:30 am – 11:45 am	Link Workers: Agents of Change
	11:45 am – 12:00 noon	Tea Break
	12:00 noon – 1:30 pm	Women: Agents of Change
	1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch
	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Roles and Responsibilities of Link Workers
	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Open discussion along with tea
Day 2	10:00 am – 10:30 am	Recap: Presentation by the Link Workers
	10:30 am – 12:00 noon	Organising the Community through Participatory Action (Broken square exercise)
	12:00 noon – 1:00 pm	Lunch
	1:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Field Visit and Wrap-up
Day 3	9:30 am – 10:30 am	Recap – Presentation by two Link Workers Group 1: Weaknesses and strengths of field visit Group 2: Suggestions, modifications and recommendations
	10:30 am – 11:30 am	Structure and Organigram of HCFP and the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved
	11:30 am – 1:30 pm	Link Workers and Self-Help Groups
	1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch
	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Action Plan for Link Workers

MODULE 1

MATCHING AND BATCHING

HCFP has a grassroots level approach, highlighting the importance of community participation for a positive and sustained outcome. Link Workers, being part of the community, are sensitive towards the issues in the community, and while involved in the project, also understand the objectives of the project. Thus, proper training and participation of the Link Workers can produce the desired outcomes.

To start training of the Link Workers, a session would be worked out to know the information and the knowledge of them through the exercise or introductory session called *Matching and Batching*.

Time: 1 hr 45 min.

Material: Pens and papers

Participants: 20

Exercise: Once the participants have arrived at the training centre, the whole group would be divided into sub-groups of a man and a woman each as per their respective areas. With the formation of these sub-groups, the introductory session will start, wherein the first partner would give the introduction of the second partner and vice-versa. After the introductory session, participants would be provided with pen and paper and would be asked to note down 5 important trees/plants, which are important from the point of view of the social system and the environment at the same time. With this, one of the participants would put the whole list on the board and as per the discussion other important trees/plants missed in the list would be added to it.

Outcomes:

With the completion of this session, following outcomes would be achieved:

- ✓ Better understanding and communication of the Link Workers working in similar villages.
- ✓ Identification of the socio-environmental relationship of the plants/trees in the daily life of the villagers.
- ✓ List of very useful plants/trees present in the surrounding areas, but that are neglected (*Annexure*)
- ✓ Sharing and interaction among all the Link Workers regarding the identical issues present in all the villages and pertaining solutions to the same.

MODULE 2

LINK WORKERS: The Agents of Change

The fulfilment of the basic objective of HCFP, i.e. the development, rejuvenation and constant maintenance of afforested land in Haryana, could be made possible only by motivating and sensitising the community for their participation. Community participation is one of the key factors for the smooth functioning, strengthening and sustainability of any programme initiated by service providers. The approach adopted should be such that it involves the target groups, specifically for the inception, planning and implementation of the activities. The community, being one of the stakeholders and the main beneficiaries, must be involved in the identification, prioritisation and selection of the resources in their area, along with the issues pertaining to the same. To ensure this, HCFP introduced Link Workers in the capacity of change agents for the promotion of Community Forestry. Link Workers are both men and women. This not only gave the platform to the women of the village to raise their voice, but also to take decisions leading to their own development, along with the development of common resources.

The Link Worker can be considered the main information carrier and disseminator in the area. Thus, while selecting and promoting Link Workers, following aspects should be taken into consideration. He/she should:

- ✓ be a resident of the village;
- ✓ be literate enough (above or up to 10th std) to understand the various work procedures;
- ✓ be aware about the social, economic and geographical condition of the village;
- ✓ be sensitive towards the local problems at the grassroots level;
- ✓ be well-known to and versed with the community;
- ✓ have the zeal to work for the development of the village;
- ✓ own a good moral and social character and be approved by the community.

With these basic requisites, Link Workers can play a very important role in the fulfilment of the HCFP objectives of encouraging community forestry.

MODULE 3

WOMEN: Agents of Change

Women constitute around 1/3 of the members of the VRMC executive body formed in each project village. However, though the importance of women in managing common property resources cannot be denied, the participation of women in the VRMC is more often than not at a very low level, and their voices are not heard when taking decisions.

It has been observed that traditionally women have been responsible for subsistence and survival economics and for water, food, fuel, fodder and habitat. Their experience reveals to them that soil, water and vegetation necessary for their day-to-day living requires care and good management. Women are not only consumers of forest products, but a large part of the labour force in forestry is provided by women. They are often responsible for cattle grazing, collecting fuel, fodder, food and seeds, making handicrafts and carrying head-loads of wood. They have more at stake in forest development. The Forest Department has certain schemes to involve women. They are employed in nursery work, where they fill up polypots, transplant seedlings and participate in tending, weeding, shifting and sorting. The Department pays them a daily wage based at minimum wage rate. Rural women are major actors in India's forestry.

Link Workers, working as a combined male-female team, would be in an excellent position to bring the VRMC women to the fore of the committee and create an environment where their opinions are heard and respected. This requires discussions with both men and women of the VRMC. Both men and women need to be reminded about the traditional roles of women in natural resource management. The village needs to see that the VRMC, and the entire village, stands to lose if women are not treated as equal partners in the committee and in the various development activities initiated by the project and the VRMC.

For this, it would be useful to start with a general overview of the plight of women in India, and in Haryana in particular.

In Haryana, considering the declining sex ratio, women in the villages should be made to understand that they are the primary caretakers of children, providers of household food security, and, in many cases, food producers. However, they remain marginalised in their communities and even in their households because they lack economic resources, power, status and opportunity. The world's poor and marginalised are disproportionately women. They have always been discriminated against:

	Injustice	Oppression	Discrimination	Causes
W O M E N I S S U E S	Harassment & violence	Voice not heard by others	Women's opinion is considered of no value	Patriarchal society
			Female foeticide, dowry	Inequalities, societal norms
			Husband remarried if wife was not producing sons/babies	Patriarchal society where woman is seen as a son-producing machine
	Widowed/ deserted women thrown out of the house	Women considered a burden and not entitled to resources	Women rights are violated	Patriarchal society
	Discrimination against working women	Ill-treatment of women	Harassment	- Male domination - Social norms - Men considered more productive – power of the rich

At the same time, all development is gendered. This inequality has an impact on the lives of most women, who are often segregated from the mainstream of empowerment, education, employment and rights. Such fragmentation denies women access to a holistic understanding of their needs and expectations from the mainstream. Thus, there is a dire need not only to empower them socially and economically in the society, making them shoulder the responsibility of their own development, but also to change the mindset of people who, although living in today's world, are following the norms of primitive ages.

Exercise 1: *With this understanding and background, the Link Worker should discuss with the community men and women separately about the different roles of women in their lifetime and the related issues, which make them vulnerable in the society. Listing should be done as to where do they think change needs to be done and where do they feel they are comfortable? Examples should be demonstrated keeping in mind their daughters – do they want the same kind of life for them also? Listing will help the participants to understand the gravity of the problem and the need for women empowerment.*

Once the need for changes is discussed, Link Workers are in a better position to act and react as per the existing scenario and knowledge of the community. This would give them opportunity to highlight the need for the participation of women in the community, while initiating a discussion among them.

Women Empowerment as the tool

Empowerment means individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice and to fulfil their potential as full and equal members of the society. The process of women empowerment begins when women's awareness of their situation, social reality and rights is raised. Increased awareness must be accompanied by more education, greater knowledge and useful skills and actions. When women organise for action, they gain further knowledge and their awareness is raised to a new level. This increased awareness leads to a new action, and the whole process is repeated. Such a continuous process can lead to higher levels of empowerment.

In other words, as per the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the following factors are included in the definition of women empowerment:

- ✓ Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- ✓ Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- ✓ Gaining the ability to generate choices and exercise bargaining power.
- ✓ Developing the ability to organise and influence the direction of social change to create more just social and economic order.

The greater and greater change that may follow can change the very belief or assumption of what constitutes power.

Exercise 2: *With the clarity of the concept of empowerment, discussion can be ignited with the women in the community on the various indicators of empowerment and depending on their experiences in daily life, to what level and in what matters they are empowered. What activities do they do with their own wish and in what matters are they empowered to make decision?*

Points should be made in comparison to their male counterparts with respect to the roles played by them and the decision making power lying with them. What is the decision making power of women members of the VRMC?

This will help them to gain clarity of the relationship between awareness or consciousness and action.

Action brings about higher levels of consciousness, and greater consciousness in turn leads to more effective action. Collective action through organising for women's empowerment such as through Self-Help Groups introduces an element of democratic decision making, leading to the development of leadership, reducing risk and external

threat and enabling women to overcome the oppression of patriarchy and to realise their own true potential.

'Extending the idea of human development to encompass women's empowerment and gender justice puts social transformation at the centre of the agenda for human development and progress of women. Choices for women, especially poor women, cannot be enlarged without a change in the relations between women and men, as well as in the ideologies and institutions that preserve and reproduce gender inequality. This does not mean reversing positions, so that men become subordinate and women dominant. Rather, it means negotiating new kinds of relationships that are not based on power over others, but on a mutual development of creative human energy. It also means negotiating new kinds of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support egalitarian and just relations between men and women.' *

At present, most development departments function according to individualistic agendas and are oblivious to the all-round needs of women in all spheres of life. Many of the schemes function with organising of women in Self-Help Groups, which proves to be an effective strategy catering to the needs and gender reality of women. Also, as these SHGs are homogeneous bodies of the stakeholders with common interests, implementation of programmes for the development of beneficiaries becomes realistic with their own participation.

Exercise 3: *Link Workers should arrange a meeting with the women and initiate the following exercise:*

Why is it important to form a group and live in an organised manner?

What are the benefits of organising ?

How can they get access to various resources and programmes initiated by the government, while being in a group?

How can the organisation of women give them a voice that is listened to in the VRMC?

Being prompted and encouraged by Link Workers, women can air their views in a healthy atmosphere and shoulder the responsibility for natural resource management with their male counterparts, along with their own empowerment and development.

* Progress of the World's Women 2000. UNIFEM Biennial Report. United Nations Development Fund for Women, New York, 2000

MODULE 4

LINK WORKERS: Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of Link Workers hold special significance with respect to the objective of the programme. Especially with the presence of a number of agencies, Link Workers need to be more responsible as they have to strike a balance between the community and the various line departments associated with the development of the village. Usually Link Workers are working for Village Resource Management Committees formed by HCFP to establish a link with the community. To ensure a better participation and facilitation of the community through Link Workers, they should play the following **roles**:

❖ As a Mediator and the Entry Point

Perhaps the key role that a Link Worker can play fulfilling the objective of the project is that of mediator between the department, VRMC and the community. In the early stages of establishing community participation, the Link Worker can facilitate initial discussions, develop community confidence and trust and provide a supporting framework for community action. Frequently where this relationship does not exist, and particularly in the areas where Link Workers have established an active supportive role, they can create an entry point for other development programmes run by several agencies.

❖ As a Facilitator

The Link Worker can frequently supplement the skills of the Village Resource Management Committee (VRMC) and the Forest Department by acting as a facilitator. This may include participatory need assessment, microplanning for collective community action, identification of problems and organising the community for sustained growth.

For the community, the Link Worker can facilitate the linkage with line departments to enhance knowledge and improve standards of living. Facilitation can also be provided to the community in terms of identification of the common problems, the follow-up of which can be done with the linkages with the line departments with the help of the Link Workers.

❖ As a Trouble-shooter

Being a participant in the project, he/she understands the objectives and the rules to follow, but having roots in the community the Link Worker also understands the problems at the grassroots level leading to conflicts. Thus, the Link Worker can assist both the community while prioritising their problems and the line agency to

understand and communicate the requirements, while looking at the problem from not only the project's perspective but also from the community's perspective, and if necessary can assist in negotiations as well.

❖ **As an Initiator**

Link Workers are volunteers working towards the development of the society with their own wish. This quality or the feeling of the Link Worker should be accompanied by his/her power of initiating ideas among the villagers, leading to actions. Rather than at the individual level, he/she should be able to build a team while giving opportunities to other people, especially women, to come forward and express their views, providing them with a comfortable environment and insight to exercise their rights in the society.

❖ **As a Multi-Purpose Worker**

Being placed at a prime position with respect to the community and the Forest Department, the Link Worker should act in a subtle manner. He/she, along with being a receptor of knowledge and information from both the sides, should also know how to disseminate the information at the right time and at the right place, sensitising the community to participate. He/she should be ready to work as per the need of the hour, while understanding the agenda behind the whole exercise. Personal interests and political interference should be avoided or overlooked with smartness rather than the direct hit.

❖ **As a Change Agent (*Parivartan ki Oor*)**

With all the above roles, the Link Worker can act as a change agent for the villages, while sensitising the community towards the need and the importance of intervention not only at the grassroots level, but also by the grassroots people. Dissemination of the relevant information given by the Forest Department to her/him would play an important role especially during the training organised by the project. This would not only give them the chance to look out for the solutions, but would also provide them opportunities to opt for strategies for their own development with the support of the line agencies.

As Link Workers are well positioned to assist both the line agencies and the community, their skills, resources and experience over the period of the project place them in a role where they can ensure post-project sustainability. In other words, this process would not only build their capacity to strengthen the programme, but would also promote them as facilitators at the time of withdrawal. Their potential can further be utilised for training in the local area, ensuring the enhanced participation of the community while preserving the natural resources of the villages.

Thus, with these roles, it is very much highlighted that they can bring together the community and the line departments into functioning and cost-effective delivery systems. Also these roles help to clearly define their responsibilities in the targeted areas as per the need of the project. **Responsibilities** of the Link Workers as per the objective of the project can be described as under:

❖ **Message Dissemination**

Message dissemination is the key task of the Link Worker. The information, which is provided to him/her, should reach the community on time, with the basic understanding of the objective. Information disseminated should be verified at both the ends so as to ensure the actual meaning of the message. The community should be sensitised and motivated to understand the meaning behind the message. Feedback of the community should be reported to the department, avoiding unnecessary tension among the two.

❖ **Organising Meetings**

Meetings should be organised periodically to disseminate important information at the community level. Link Workers should give a call to the community for the meetings being organised by the VRMC. Various tasks of the Link Workers in these meetings, as support to the VRMC office bearers, are as under:

- ◆ Selection of the site or the venue of the meeting, if necessary.
- ◆ Sitting in these meetings to help the villagers to understand the meaning.
- ◆ Assisting in maintaining the minutes of the meetings and circulating among the organisers and the department.
- ◆ Maintaining discipline while meeting is on to avoid any nuisance.
- ◆ Taking the signatures of the members present in the meetings.
- ◆ Understanding the message of the meeting clearly so that they can disseminate it to other people in the community who due to some reasons could not attend the meeting.

❖ **Natural Resource Management and Preservation**

Being introduced and promoted by the Haryana Community Forestry Project, the main objective of the Link Worker is to enhance the forestry programme in the villages. Various activities that can be undertaken for the same are as under:

- ◆ Promoting the nurseries in the area with the help of the Forest Department.
- ◆ Assisting in keeping records of the plants and the trees of the village.

- ◆ Tracing the reasons for the cause of the death of plants or trees in the respective area and accessing the consultation of the Forest Department on the same.
- ◆ Maintaining the timely records of the same while comparing the growth from the previous period.
- ◆ Reporting the details to the Forest Department so that timely action can be taken, in case there is any serious problem.
- ◆ Promoting environment friendly activities like usage of organic fertiliser like vermi-compost, organic farming, bee keeping, collection of cotton seeds with proper storage facilities, food grain storage in an adequate manner to avoid pests and fungus, importance and need to cultivate floriculture like marigold, rose for rose water etc.

❖ **Farmer Solidarity Groups (*Kisan Sangathit Samuh*)**

Communities should be motivated to create Farmers Solidarity Groups (FSGs) and pick up the agendas favourable for the growth of their produce. The Link Worker should attend the meetings and keep track of the attendance and in case there is decrease, he/she should try to find out the possible reasons. Solutions to the problems should be taken up in the community meeting of VRMC and communities should be re-motivated to attend the same. Farmers should be provided with the insight that with the help of the farmer clubs, their negotiation power gets increased providing them with better opportunities in the market to buy raw material and sell off their produce.

❖ **Market Survey**

With respect to the economic development of the community, the main role of the Link Worker would be to *explore and provide the linkages for the success and sustainability of the Self-Help Group programme* implemented by the Haryana Community Forestry Project, in which he/she would provide the following inputs:

- ◆ Identification of the local resources available.
- ◆ Exploration with respect to the availability of raw material to initiate entrepreneurial activities in the village.
- ◆ Presence of any training institute in the local area, so as to upscale the skills of the potential entrepreneurs in relation with market demand.
- ◆ Market survey so as to come up with the demand in order to make the supply side competent enough to sustain the enterprise.
- ◆ Estimation of the financial resources available with respect to availability and accessibility.
- ◆ Facilitation/support of the SHGs and other micro-entrepreneurs to improve their activities.

❖ **Miscellaneous**

Along with the above mentioned activities, the potential of the Link Workers can be utilised to act as multiple facilitators, for example, whenever there is a need, they can help in site selection for the meetings with the departments or the external agencies. There are various very good initiatives made by HCFP for the overall development of the community, like literacy training of village women. Link Workers can identify and organise classes for such training and conduct the training itself. This can set examples for others, while giving the message for the participation of women in such concepts and practical approaches. They can also be deployed for the initiation, motivation and sensitisation of the community for other innovative activities like importance and usage of smokeless chulhas and follow-up of the same.

Undoubtedly, this approach requires significant capacity building and attitudinal change. Once Link Workers have built their understanding of the key objectives of the project in relation to the community partnerships and have acknowledged the need for the assistance, they are in a position to identify the gaps in their capacity and options for bridging these gaps by utilising resources from the external agencies coming forward for the intervention in their respective areas. With this, Link Workers are ideally positioned to develop sensible and effective systems at the grassroots level, and to work with line departments to ensure successful integration into broader service networks.

MODULE 5

Organising the Community through Participatory Action

Community participation is very important in the identification and resolution of issues, without which no beneficiary oriented programme can be successful. Participation at the grassroots level empowers the communities to design, implement and manage their own settlement programmes. The methods adopted by the Link Workers for community sensitisation should be participatory, community-based, problem-driven, fast, and designed to inform policy at the grassroots. It should also include an active, intense community-based workshop, depending on the goals of the project such as initiating entrepreneurial skills for improved economic base through Self-Help Groups, along with the management of the natural resources. One of the exercise which can be undertaken in the community workshops can be Broken Square (*Tute chakoro ko jodna*). The details of the exercise are as under:

BROKEN SQUARE EXERCISE **(*Tute chakoro ko jodna*)**

Prerequisites:

25-30 participants

Cardboard (cut into 25/30 same size squares)

Scissors (to cut the 25/30 same size squares into different shapes)

Time: 45 minutes (Exercise)

45 minutes (Discussion)

Rules:

To carry out the exercise participants can be divided into 5-6 groups, with each group having five members in it. With an odd number of participants, a few participants can be made observers, with the responsibility to observe the whole exercise, the activities of each and every participant and come up with the findings. While forming the groups, it should be taken into consideration that it should be a mixed group, wherein people from different backgrounds are involved. This would help in enhanced participation, as people who have less knowledge would be able to learn from others.

Each participant is given a set of jumbled pieces, which do not fit to a square. (Pieces have been cut and arranged in jumbled sets before the start of the exercise.) These jumbled sets are distributed to each group in such a manner that if they are rearranged in between participants they will fit to big squares. Each group has to form five squares of equal size – one for each participant – from the jumbled pieces given, within a time limit of 20 minutes. Time to time rules would be declared; like in the first 5 minutes no one can talk or signal to each other, in the next 10 minutes they can only give cardboard pieces to

other participants, but cannot take or ask for pieces from others, and in the last 5 minutes everybody can help each other. Time intervals for changing the rules will be determined by the facilitator depending on the progress of the exercise. The exercise will be completed when each participant in each group has before him/her a perfect square of the same size as those in front of the other participants. Some groups may complete the exercise well before the time limit, and will then observe how the exercise proceeds in groups not yet finished. It may happen that some groups end up with only three or four squares and odd pieces that just won't fit together. Then analyse why some groups could successfully complete their squares, while others couldn't.

Few observations: There would be lack of understanding, coordination and cooperation among the group members, as they would not try to find out the procedure of the exercise, but would start immediately to perform as per their understanding. Once the instructions/ rules would be declared, a feeling of competition would be there and everyone would like to complete his/her square without bothering for the need of others. In fact, some of them would also try and conceal the pieces with themselves and would not even share them with the other participants, leading to problems for the other participants and provoking conflicts within the groups.

With the observations, which are made by the facilitator, following **lessons** can be highlighted for the community:

- ◆ Need to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation for the implementation of any programme.
- ◆ Need for sharing and interaction for a successful outcome.
- ◆ Importance of unity and solidarity for the development of the community.
- ◆ Importance of attending meetings for better clarity of concepts and procedural details of the programme implemented.
- ◆ Identification of the facilitators in the community having the clarity of the importance of community organisation.
- ◆ Conflict resolution with collective efforts.
- ◆ Importance of healthy competition.

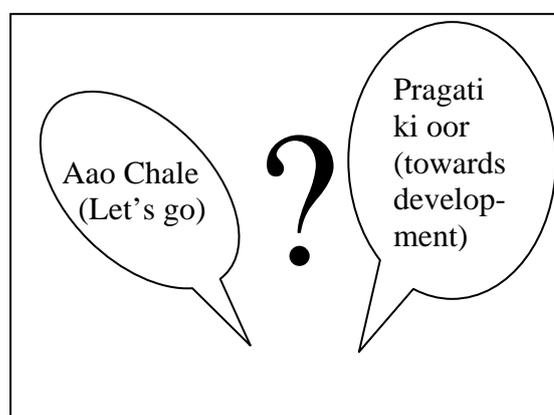
The exercise would lead to a discussion among the participants about the roles of not only the facilitator, but also the community for the successful implementation of the programme to achieve maximum positive benefits. Similar types of exercises can be designed by the Link Workers with the help of the facilitator and be used in community workshops for effective outcomes and increased understanding of the community.

Behavioural Communication Change (BCC) and the Material

Attitudinal change, with respect to any issue, is the best way to bring about a change in the society, for which the mindset needs to be modified/developed as per the needs of the initiative. Thus, the activities taken up are to be designed and carried out very carefully, keeping in mind the existing psychology of the people. The foremost task is the continuity of the activity, which could be made possible with regular visits to the community along with a sensible contact mechanism. The various methods that can be adopted for BCC by the Link Worker with the participation of the community are as under:

Pictorial Representation: Pictorial representation is always proven to be the best way of communication as it is easy to understand and gets stored in the memory of the spectator.

This type of method is more successful in rural communities where the literacy levels are comparatively low. This can be done in the form of flash cards based on a story in which it is highlighted that there is a lack of amenities, and the ways villagers access them through different means. They should also explain the different problems faced by the people in accessing the existing resources due to lack of availability and affordability. Cards would also



highlight as to how, with the help of the facilitator/ Link Worker, the community can get support to form solidarity and participate in groups like SHGs and improve their status of living.

Pamphlets and Posters along with sensible wall-writings can be other ways to make the community aware about the whole programme of HCFP and the importance of a clean and healthy environment. Need and importance for the preservation of the natural environment, especially trees and plants, can be highlighted via these means.

Songs and Slogans: Initially songs and slogans can be prepared by the facilitator to motivate the community women, but later on as they start motivating, they should be encouraged to compose their own songs. These women can then be encouraged to sing these songs during functions or get-togethers organised by the VRMCs or SHGs or federations at different points of time, setting an example for the other community women.

In addition to this, different types of BCC material can be developed with the participation of the community, giving confidence to the other group members as well.

MODULE 6

LINK WORKER: Field Operations

Once the concept clarity about the need and the importance of the Link Workers has been explained along with their roles and responsibilities, it becomes important to exercise the **knowledge** in the field to promote it as **practice**. To assist the Link Workers in the understanding of the training for the practical aspect, a field visit would be planned in one of the villages of the Link Workers.

Field visit: Identification and selection of field visit would be done by the participants based on sharing of experiences. It would be done in the Day 1 wrap-up session.

Time: Half day

Exercise: Meeting of the VRMC would be arranged wherein the two Link Workers of the same village would be playing their roles made clear to them in the first 5 modules. Like message dissemination for meetings, assisting the villagers to understand the agenda, maintaining minutes, looking after the participation of women during the meeting etc. The other Link Workers who are the participants would be observing them and make note of the roles played by them, while mentioning the strengths and weaknesses of the Link Worker during the exercise.

Once the meeting is over, the records pertaining to plantations (the microproject logbook) and other VRMC records would also be seen and points on the same would be taken.

Outcomes:

Based on the above field exercise, following outcomes would be achieved:

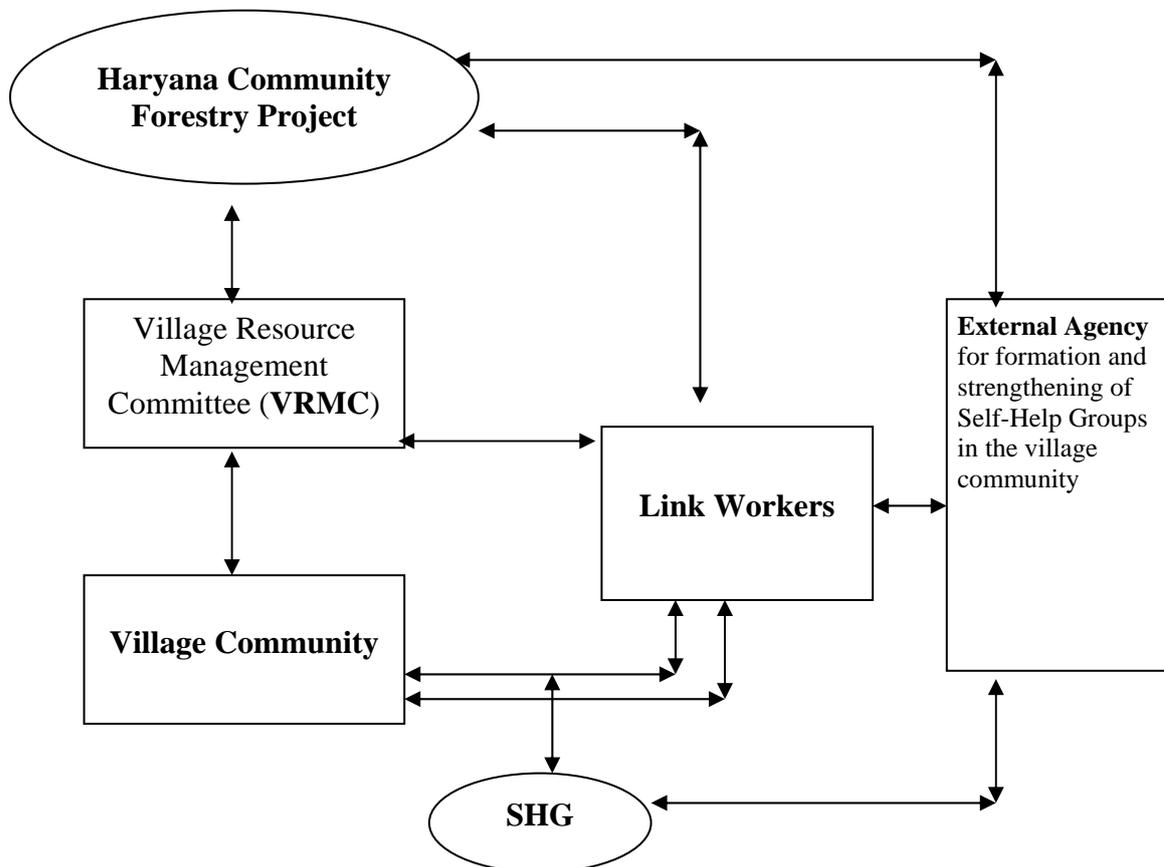
- ✓ Importance of the Link Workers would be assessed for organising and managing the village level community meeting.
- ✓ Weaknesses and strengths of the Link Workers would also be pointed out while assessing the same. What was the participation of women in the VRMC meeting, and what role did the Link Workers play in bringing them on?
- ✓ The exercise would also provide the Link Workers with an opportunity to make a report, which is an essential part of maintaining records.

MODULE 7

ORGANISATIONAL HIERARCHY: Linkages from top to bottom

Before starting with the activities at grassroots level, a Link Worker must have clarity of the organisational hierarchy in order to have transparency and communication track. The organisational set-up includes Haryana Community Forestry Project office as the main source for the project details, VRMC (Village Resource Management Committee) for information on the existing resources of the village, the community as direct beneficiary and the members of SHGs.

The organisational communication plan that needs to be understood by the workers is as follows:



The chart above explains the communication channel among the various agencies involved under the Haryana Community Forestry Project. Not only does it clarify the different levels of the stakeholders, but it also defines the position of the Link Workers in the whole process.

The different roles of the different agencies or bodies involved are as under:

Haryana Community Forestry Project: The main objective of HCFP is to initiate the rural development process in which villagers understand the importance of the natural resources and participate towards the development and the conservation of the same. The main concern of HCFP is that this is possible only when all sections of the village communities come together, which is not possible as long as they do not have equal opportunities regarding source of income. This highlights the identification of the skills present in the community and the marketing of the same. In line with its objective to develop community capacity and capability, a variety of programmes are being organised by the project like formation of community institutions such as Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs), training of community members, exposure visits, participatory planning, implementation and monitoring.

Village Resource Management Committee (VRMC): This committee is constituted by the villagers and carries the information regarding the various resources that are existent within the village. The structure of VRMC is voluntary and democratic. Members decide who can join their group, who would lead them, what rules they would follow and what activities they would undertake. Decisions in the committee are based on consensus or majority vote. Not only do they keep the records, but also work towards management of resources. Thus, they can be helpful in providing the information on the same in relation with the resources in the nearby areas and how they can be harnessed for the further development of the village. These committees are also aware about the local methods for the management of the resources and thus can be used as the entry guide to the village.

External Agencies (NGO): External Agencies or Non-Government Organisations are introduced by HCFP to fulfil the above-mentioned objectives. NGOs have been selected depending on their specialisation in the respective field of formation and strengthening of Self-Help Groups and encouraging the community for the practice of community forestry by sensitising them and linking them with different market avenues. They work independently on the defined objectives of the Haryana Community Forestry Project. They have their own staff based on their need and the Department, on the basis of their performance, measures the outcomes. They work in the community directly, but maintain communication with the Department through a reporting mechanism.

Link Workers: Link Workers are people from the village, selected by the community to disseminate information and carry forward the exercise as per the objectives of the project.

The main purposes of the Department to involve the Link Workers are to establish a bond with the community and provide them employment that is related to the development of their own communities. The main role of these Link Workers is to disseminate information and knowledge about issues related to local resource management and to obtain the maximum participation of the beneficiaries, directing towards the sustainability of the programme.

Self-Help Groups: The Self-Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association of poor people, preferably from the same socio-economic background. They come together for the purpose of solving their common problems through self-help and mutual help. The SHG promotes small savings among its members. The savings are kept with a bank. Usually, the number of members in one SHG does not exceed twenty. The SHGs comprise very poor people who do not have access to formal financial institutions. They act as a forum for the members to provide space and support to each other. SHGs also enable the members to learn to cooperate and work in a group environment. The SHG provides a savings mechanism that suits the needs of the members. It also provides a cost-effective delivery mechanism for small credit to its members. The SHGs significantly contribute to the empowerment of poor women.

The other objective of this is that self-help is a way to deal with problems that everyone faces from time to time in their lives – illness, divorce, the death of a loved one, emotional upsets or strains. Talking over these problems with other people who have lived through them can help us cope with today's difficulties and help us learn how to deal with tomorrow. Helping is at the centre of all this activity: knowing how to receive help, give help and help yourself. Underlying self-help is the basic theme: "You are not alone." Self-Help Group members:

- Feel less isolated knowing others share similar problems;
- Exchange ideas and effective ways to cope with problems;
- Actively work on their attitudes and behaviour to make positive changes in their lives;
- Gain a new sense of control over their lives.

The knowledge base of self-help mutual support groups is experiential, indigenous, and rooted in the wisdom that comes from struggling with problems in concrete, shared ways. Self-Help Groups build on the strengths of their members.

MODULE 8

Link Workers and Self-Help Groups

At the end of the session, the community should be able to answer the following:

- What is a Self-Help Group?
- Need for Self-Help Groups?
- Qualities of a good Self-Help Group?
- Procedures for the working of Self-Help Groups.
- The role of Self-Help Groups in obtaining the objectives defined by the Haryana Community Forestry Project.

To achieve the above-mentioned understanding in the village community, the Link Worker needs to play the following role:

- 1) Preliminary Step: As Link Workers belong to the same community and have prior contact with the villagers, it will be easier to identify the potential Self-Help Group members in the community. Informal contacts should be established with the village leaders and informal groups in the village. Meetings should be arranged with homogeneous groups, keeping in mind the caste system, as it is one of the important issues in the rural set-up. It is necessary to provide them reminders of the meeting, but it should always be arranged as per the convenience of the villagers.
- 2) Introduction and Initiation: In the general meeting with the villagers with different groups of men and women, the concept of self-help should be explained. The main aim behind this meeting is to provide adequate information and ensure that there are no doubts and misconceptions about the proposed scheme. In the same meeting, date, time and venue should be decided for the next meeting, which is specific to the target group, i.e. women.
- 3) Specific Group Meetings: The main task starts with these specific group meetings, in which the issues related to self-help would be undertaken (Exercises 1-3 in Module 3). This process of specific and general village meetings helps in generating community level meetings, helps in generating interest in the 'Self- Help' concept on the one hand and the identification of the potential target groups on the other hand.

Target group identification also depends on the nature of formal and informal groups, which already exist in the village. For example, caste-based groups, village chit funds, VRMC, etc. Since these groups are used to collective action, it would be easier to introduce the concept of self-help.

It should also be explained as to why women are considered better for the Self-Help Groups with respect to saving pattern.

Exercise 1: *Link Workers will enable the participants to explain: why women for the Self-Help Groups? Women should be asked to suggest the reasons why they are being considered the main persons for the formation of Self-Help Groups*

The meeting should reach the following points:

- *Among the poor, the poor women are the most disadvantaged - they are characterized by lack of education and access to resources, both of which are required to help them work their way out of poverty and for upward economic and social mobility.*
- *The problem is more acute for women in countries like India, despite the fact that women's labour makes a critical contribution to the economy - this is due to low social status and lack of access to key resources.*
- *Women tend to save more reliably and regularly than men. For whatever reasons, they tend to save more rather than spending money on short-term, non-productive items like liquor. This makes them better customers for saving products.*
- *Evidence shows that groups of women are better customers than men - they are better managers of resources - benefits of loans are spread wider in the household if loans are routed through women - mixed groups are often inappropriate in the Indian society.*
- *Women are more concerned than men about the future of their children. Saving is one way of building security.*

Once the women are convinced about the above factors, it becomes easier to focus on the need of the Self-Help Group. One of the main needs can be micro-credit for the initiation or the growth of economic activities by the villagers.

- 4) Formation of Self-Help Group: The above focused meetings and the whole idea behind the SHG to be formed by women exclusively would be followed by the formation of women Self-Help Groups. These Self-Help Groups would be formed keeping in mind the similar backgrounds either in terms of their caste, which plays a very important role in the rural setting, or the place of residence (as per the wish of the women). The size of the group should not exceed 20 members to allow proper management.
- 5) Selection of the Office Bearers: The group would select the office bearers, i.e. president, secretary and treasurer. They should have leadership qualities and should be willing to take on the responsibilities.

Exercise 2: Members should be made to participate in listing the roles and responsibilities of the office bearers with the help of the facilitator/Link Worker.

Following conclusions can be drawn with the assistance of the facilitator at the end of the session:

President: Responsible for calling and conducting the regular (monthly or fortnightly) SHG meetings, in which group members save regularly and discussions can be initiated on the other needs of the members, like loans etc.

Secretary: Responsible for keeping the minutes of the meetings along with the signatures of the members present in the meetings and recording the demands for loans in the group.

Treasurer: Responsible for maintaining and collecting the savings, for disbursement of loans, repayment and the transactions with the bank in future.

Once this is done, the facilitator/Link Worker can initiate the exercise of making the rules and the regulations of the group operations as per the understanding of the members.

6) SHG Operations: Along with the savings and the responsibilities of the office bearers it becomes imperative to chalk out the other roles of the SHGs, like loans, repayment etc, depending on the need of the community.

Loans: Before disbursing the loans, it should be made clear that loans are to cater to the different needs of the members, which are not fulfilled by the existing financial resources due to lack of either affordability or accessibility.

Exercise 3: Needs should be pointed out by the women themselves, depending on their domestic and economic demands.

Needs should be classified into three categories: consumption needs, emergent needs and entrepreneurial needs, depending on which they should be encouraged to work out for the fulfilment of their economic needs as it would automatically fulfil their consumption demands.

Consumption needs: Marriages, domestic functions, possession of luxury items like TV, car etc.

Emergent needs: Death in the family, construction of a house, renovation due to the approaching rainy season etc.

Economic needs: Starting the income generation activities, expansion of the economic activity, buying and selling of the raw material and finished product etc.

✓ This would help the women to streamline the usage of their savings in the later years of their SHG.

With this identification, they should be assisted to describe the most important need of all, leading to the improvement in the physical as well as the socio-economic quality of life in future.

Exercise 4: *The facilitator should make them rank the needs and conclude with the formulation of the rules for the disbursement of loans, like:*

- 80% for the economic needs to enhance and expand the productive base for increased income, automatically providing solutions to other needs.
- 10% for consumption till the time the economic base becomes strong.
- 10% for the emergency needs (can be increased depending on the gravity of the problem with the member).

Repayment Procedure: Rules for the repayment procedure should go hand in hand with the lending. The facilitator should make it very clear that instalments should not be very small or very large but reasonable, so as to make maximum use of the resources available within a stipulated time period.

Exercise 5: *The facilitator initiates the discussion to decide the instalments and the interest rates, keeping in mind the increase in the funds of the groups along with the suitability of the members. Penalty and other rules should also be kept for the defaulters.*

7) **Linkages with the Bank and other Entrepreneurial Activities:** Once the Self-Help Groups are mature bodies with smooth functioning of the collection of savings, inter-lending activities and maximum recovery of the same over a period of six months to one year, along with clearly maintained records, bank linkages can be initiated by the facilitator for opening a regularised bank account in the name of the group. Application form should be brought from the bank and the Link Worker should help the members to understand and fill the form.

The key for stabilising the SHG operations is to ensure that loans are taken and repaid on time along with the regular savings, leading to interest in increasing the savings amount and enhancing the funds in the group for further usage.

While reaching this stage, the SHG women members have gained self-confidence and have the ability to start micro-enterprises for individual or group income generating activities. To realise this, the facilitator should also explore the various market avenues in which help can be taken from the VRMC. This should be followed by estimation of the status and condition of the existing skills in the human resources to adapt to the particular economic activity. Proper cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to verify the economic viability of the enterprise.

Once this information is gathered, the external agency can intervene and provide training and guidance for the persuasion of the same, helping the community to start their own enterprise.

Exercise 6: *Observing the formation of the SHG and monitoring its activities, the facilitator/moderator/Link Worker should make the members point out the characteristics of a good SHG.*

Points should be presented in the following manner at the end of the meeting:

Homogeneous Membership: *As far as possible, the membership of an SHG may comprise people from comparable socio-economic background. Though difficult to define in clear terms, a major indicator of homogeneity in membership is **absence of conflicting interests** among members.*

No Discrimination: *There should not be any discrimination among members based on caste, religion or political affiliations.*

Small Membership: *Ideally, the group size may be between 15 and 20, so that the members participate in all activities of the SHG. In a smaller group, members get opportunity to speak openly and freely. However, the membership may not be so small that its financial transactions turn out to be insignificant.*

Regular Attendance: *Total participation in regular group meetings lends strength to the effectiveness of SHGs. To achieve this, the SHGs should place strong emphasis on regular attendance in the group meetings.*

Transparency in Functioning: *It is important that all financial and non-financial transactions are transparent in an SHG. This promotes trust, mutual faith and confidence among its members. Maintenance of books of accounts as also other records like the minutes book, attendance register, etc. are important.*

Set of Bye-laws: *The SHG may discuss and finalise a set of bye-laws, indicating rules and regulations for the SHG's functioning and also roles and responsibilities of members. It is better to have a written set of bye-laws.*

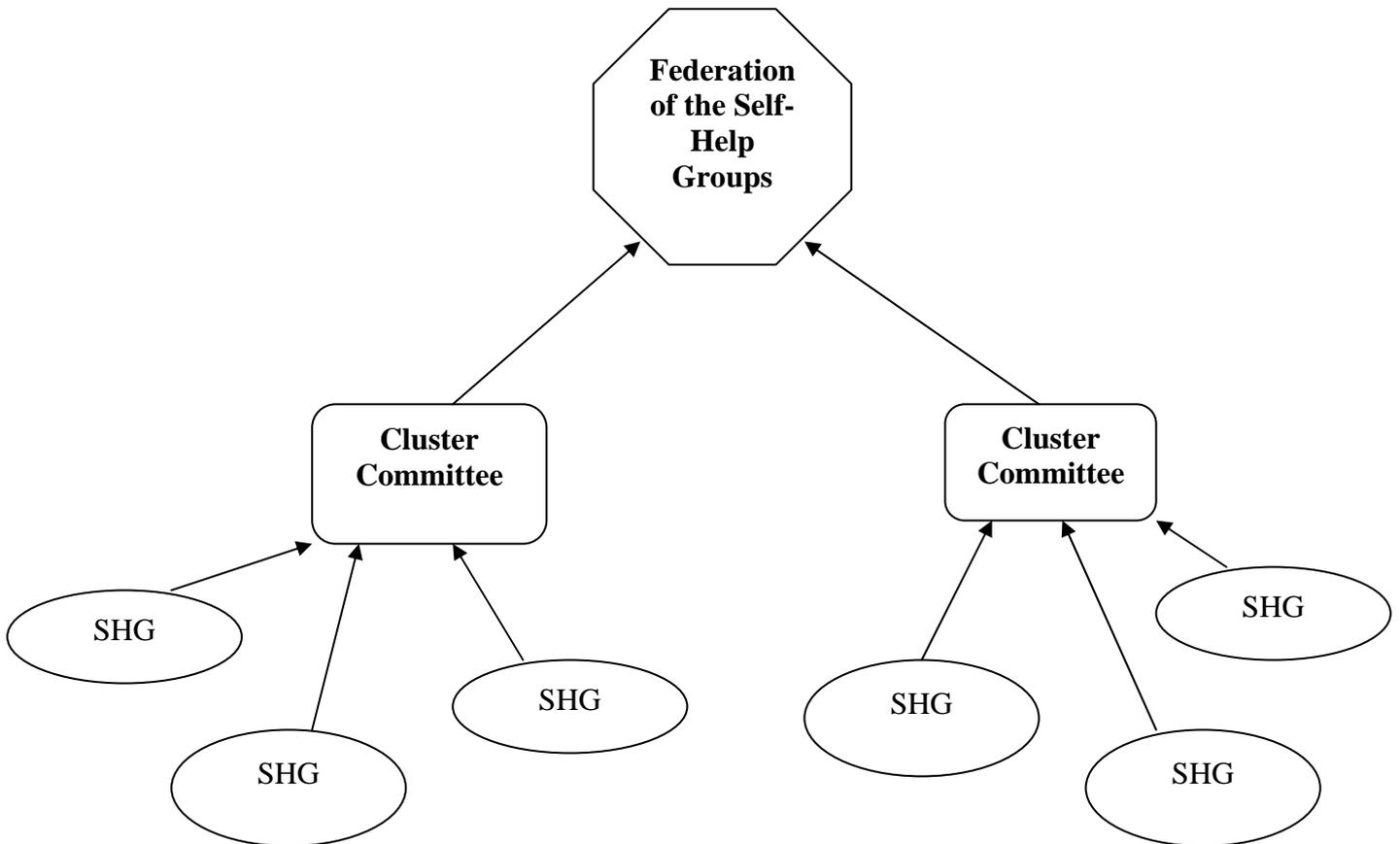
Thrift: *The habit of thrift (small savings) is fundamental to the SHG and helps in building up a strong common fund.*

Utilising Savings for Lending: *Once an SHG has accumulated a sizeable amount in the form of savings, say for a period of about 3-6 months, the members may be allowed to avail loans against their savings for emergent consumption and supplementary income generating credit needs.*

- 8) Grouping SHGs into Clusters: Once the SHGs have matured in carrying out their thrift and credit activities along with strong bank linkages, they can be further networked into clusters based on geographical proximity. Around 10 to 20 SHGs can be clustered together with the representation of the group by one to two members from each group. The formation of the cluster committee would be taken up to monitor the functioning of the SHGs and the conflict resolution among the groups. The cluster level organisation would be able to provide the platform for interaction with other local organisations and would also play an important role in initiating the income generation activities. Along with this, it will certainly boost the confidence of the women SHG members. The reliance on the local moneylenders would be removed totally and women begin to assert themselves in other ways. At this stage, the withdrawal mechanism can be planned by the external agency.
- 9) Grouping Clusters into an SHG Federation: Looking at the activities of the cluster committees for some time - their active and independent monitoring and management of SHGs - a federation of the SHGs can be formed to supervise and oversee the networking operations of these grassroot local organisations.

Each cluster would nominate their members to constitute a body of federation of SHGs. The procedure of selection would be election of a president, secretary and treasurer as office bearers. This body would work as an apex body for decision making depending on the strength of the individuals, and in turn provides them the platform to raise their collective voices at a higher level of decision making. At this stage, there will be complete withdrawal of the agency involved in planning with the SHGs.

The whole structure from the formation of the primary SHGs as the agents of change to the formation of the federation of SHGs as the decision making body at a higher level would look like this:



With these higher levels of cluster and federation, it becomes even more important that the members are adequately trained to monitor activities and accounts of the groups. Over a longer period of time, with the sustained development being brought by the SHG, the overall development of the village can be achieved.

MODULE 9

LINK WORKER: Action Plan

Once the above understanding of the Link Worker is established, it is important to develop an action plan so as to achieve the desired outcome, keeping in mind the defined objectives of HCFP. Action plan should be developed in the end of the training, considering the knowledge of the Link Workers. It should be participatory in nature so that all the Link Workers irrespective of gender are able to participate in it. The guidelines, which can be used for the preparation of the action plan, are as under:

- ❖ Holding of different training and exercises like Broken square in the respective villages of Link Workers at least once in two months.
- ❖ Assisting in keeping the records of fruit plants and trees on farmlands and maintenance of the same.
- ❖ Organising VRMC meetings as per need and assisting in maintaining the records in the same, along with the facilitation to the community to understand the meaning of the messages conveyed in the meetings.
- ❖ Taking measures to ensure that women members of the VRMC become active participants in the VRMC meetings, and that their opinions are listened to and respected in taking decisions.
- ❖ Attending the meetings of Self-Help Groups, while keeping in mind the basic objective of the HCFP for the formation of the same.
- ❖ Linking the community with the different programmes of the Haryana Government.
- ❖ Developing linkages with the bankers for the promotion of credit for the villagers to initiate an entrepreneurial activity.
- ❖ Developing linkages across HCFP villages in the same cluster.

ANNEXURE

Examples of important plants and trees and their significance

Plants/Trees	Medicinal	Environment	Economic	Religion/Festivals
Basil (Tulsi)	*	*	*	*
Neem	*	*		*
Pipal	*	*		*
Bad	*	*	*	*
Guava (Amrood)	*	*		
Tamarind (Imli)	*	*	*	
Papaya	*	*	*	
Lemon	*	*	*	
Shisham		*	*	
Amla	*	*	*	
Mulberry (Shahtut)		*	*	
Marigold	*	*	*	
Sunflower	*	*	*	*
Eucalyptus	*	*	*	
Dhak (Flame of the Forest)	*	*	*	*