

*Policy and Institutional Reforms to Ensure Right to Health,
Education and Livelihood for All*

Strategic Plan 2009-2013



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SUPRO, the Campaign for Good Governance has been playing an important role in upholding rights of marginalized people in Bangladesh since its establishment in 2000. Its decade long experience of facilitating grassroots activism and continuous efforts at local, national and international level has enriched knowledge and understanding of the members and strengthen the process of working together with citizen actors and rights defenders at different level. Over the years, SUPRO members contributed in designing and implementing its program activities to reach the targeted output and results. The secretariat staff members have also played a wonderful role in putting forward the causes of marginalized people. I want to extend a big thank to all of them for their contribution, ideas and comments to prepare present strategic plan of SUPRO for the period of 2009-2013. This plan reflects the idea, opinion and suggestions of Networking Members, National Council, Executive Board and Secretariat staff.

The 1st strategic planning workshop was held on 21-22 March 2008 at Institute of Child and Mother Health (ICMH), Matuail, Dhaka with participation of National Council Members, District Leaders and staff members of secretariat. This workshop provided substantial input to revisit the vision, mission and strategy considering the contextual analysis and identifying the critical issues to be addressed in the strategic planning for the next five years. I am thankful to the participants of the workshop for their contribution and suggestions. Following that workshop, several meetings, discussions were held with members, staff and also with external experts on strategic planning. Special thanks to the Executive Board members for their expert advice and helpful suggestions to finalize the draft. Based on the draft strategic planning was shared at Annual General Meeting held on 31 January -2 February 2009 at Cox's Bazar, which was reviewed and finally adopted by the AGM. I am also thankful to all in the process who have provided valuable contributions.

I am grateful to Mr. Azizur Rahman Khan Asad for his generous support and facilitation of 1st workshop and to Mr. Monower Mostafa to articulate and drafting the strategic planning document. Finally I would like to appreciate all secretariat staff for taking extra work-load beyond their day to day planned work to complete the strategic planning in due time.

Finally, I am hopeful that this strategic plan would be instrumental in materializing policy and institutional reforms to ensure rights of marginalized people to health, education and livelihood. I am also hopeful that SUPRO will get continued support and cooperation from all concerned to materialize the mission and objectives set in the long term plan.

Abdul Awal
Chairperson

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AOC	Amar Odhikar Campaign
APMDD	Asia Pacific Movement on Debt & Development
BNNRC	Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication
CAPRE	Campaign for Political Reform
COAST	Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CAPRE	Campaign for Political Reform
DFID	Department for International Development
DCC	District Campaign Committee
EB	Executive Board
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
ES	Essential Service
GCAP	Global Campaign Against Poverty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IFI	International Financial Institute
LDC	Least Developed Country
LGI	Local Government Institute
M & E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MP	Member of Parliament
NC	National Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRDS	Noakhali Rural Development Society
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PFM	People's Forum on MDG
PPP	Purchase Power Parity
PPS	Pabna Progati Sangho
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBA	Right Based Approach
SAAPE	South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication
SAARC	South Asia Alliance for Regional Cooperation
SDS	Shariatpur Development Society
SDG	SAARC Development Goal
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats
SUPRO	Sushasoner Jonny Procharavijan
TNC	Trans National Coporation
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UN	United Nations
VOICE	Voices for Interactive Choices and Empowerment
WB	World Bank
WE	Welfare Efforts
WTO	World Trade Organization
YPSA	Young Power in Social Action

1. Introduction

The strategic review and planning process, which produced strategic plan, was designed as an internal self-appraisal of the effectiveness of SUPRO in meeting current and future needs of its constituencies. The process was intended to re-assure SUPRO that, even after 8 years since its inception, its mission, and strategic objectives remain relevant, that it is keeping abreast with the relevant critical issues and trends, and that it is addressing these efficiently with its various stakeholders.

The process itself involved several steps over the last couple of months (September – December 2008): a) an organizational assessment focusing on internal strengths and weaknesses; b) a brief external environmental review which sought to capture key issues and trends as well as developments and changes affecting SUPRO, and c) a two-day strategic review and planning workshop, at which the program and campaign participants and partners were consulted.

The resulting strategic plan presents a comprehensive and holistic picture of the issues and agenda for SUPRO's action during the next five years (2009-2013). Largely, the picture is one of outstanding issues and challenges still to be fully addressed in order to advance critical understanding of development policies and processes and human rights. However and although broad strategic directions are similar to current ones, new interventions and action areas will be implemented to assure the desired impact.

A strategic plan cannot cover every foreseeable need, and is not meant to be static. Also, SUPRO is not starting afresh. Considering these, the strategic plan has been designed as a flexible framework for building on past and current successes, while initiating new lines of action responding to new demands. In both cases, the actions are expected to enable the organization to continue to play a strategic and effective role in the society. The strategic plan is presented in eight particular sections. Each briefly analyzes the situation and needs in the area covered.

2. The Context

In 1971 Bangladesh began its journey as a newly independent nation after a war of liberation, which exacted great sacrifice from people, with a parliamentary form of government. The people of the country struggled for an independent state to have a just and equitable society with new socio-political relations. High expectations for quick and all-embracing development of the economy and democratization of the society were not unusual in a newly independent state of Bangladesh especially after the long struggle for emancipation. However, after thirty-seven years of experience since independence presents a quite different scenario although it has gone through several socio-economic changes and reforms. The country is now more open and integrated with the global economy and more under global governance too. Despite these changes, Bangladesh still remains a poverty stricken country and a fragile democracy.

Although national elections are taking place regularly since 1991, the democratic process is still in a vulnerable state. Wide spread poverty, pervasive corruption, low income, high economic disparity, food dependency, eroding economic sovereignty, fragile democratic institutions, rising religious fundamentalism etc. are posing formidable threat to democracy and development. It is argued that there is a strong link between the nature of socio-economic development and the fragility of the democratic process and subsequent governance practices. Bangladesh cannot have a strong foundation of democracy and just governance without repairing the essential structures, institutions and policies required for it.

2.1 Poverty, inequality and vulnerability

Bangladesh has recorded impressive economic and social gains in the past decade. It has commendable advancement in basic human-development indicators and entered into the league of medium human development countries in 2004. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in terms of economic growth and yearly per capita income (per capita GNI) that has crossed the \$500-mark and looks set to rise further. The Country's current gross domestic product (GDP) amounts to almost \$68 billion, while exports have grown almost 30 times from a paltry \$348.42 million in 1972-73 to over \$10 billion in recent years (Bangladesh Economic Survey: 2007). Bangladesh's march towards meeting the MDGs has been possible largely due to its steady economic growth of nearly 5 per cent annually on average in the 1990s, and nearly 6 per cent annually on average in the new millennium. However, one of the important shortcomings to date is due to its failure to make growth processes sufficiently pro-poor. The share of the poorest quintile in both national income and consumption has been reduced over the years, which shows that the poor are not benefiting greatly from the growth process. Recent economic growth in Bangladesh has not led to a major fall in poverty.

With a population of 144.3 million (2006), Bangladesh is the most populous of the world's least developed countries (LDCs). If the current growth rate continues, it is presumed that in a small country of 147,570 square kilometer, the population may exceed 200 million by 2035, and 240 million by 2050. In respect to per capita income, Bangladesh is also one of the poorest countries in the world. The country is the home of 70 million poor people, which constitute 10% of world poor population. Although the proportion of people living in poverty has decreased by almost 7% during the last 15 years from 1991 to 2005 (SUPRO: 2007), but half of its population still lives on less than \$1 a day (PPP \$); and 83% on less than \$2 a day. And almost 20 million (over 7%) are extreme poor, living on less than 16p a day (DFID: 2007). The poor are normally landless and illiterate. Over 60%

of the rural population is practically landless and 40% of the total land is owned by merely 6% of the households. It is foreseen that the number of landless families will continue to increase at a rate of 4% per year. The extreme poor are predominantly wage labour households, female-headed or with disabled male income earner, living in areas of high vulnerability to natural disasters and typically beyond the reach of current development. The poor are regularly exposed to external shocks and crisis due to natural disasters, illness, insecurity, dowry and other life-cycle events. These events cause lower incomes, destruction of assets and consequently an increase in vulnerability. Research indicates that losses of income per rural household due to external shocks are equivalent to almost two months income. This vulnerability is probably one of the main factors hindering the poor, often landless, to increase their income, invest in productive activities and eventually graduate from poverty.

While the percentage of people living in poverty has decreased; the absolute number of poor people has increased. In a recent study (April 2008) showed that the number of people living below the poverty line was on the rise in recent times due to exorbitant increases in food prices. The number would now stand at about 90 million, up from previously estimated 60 million or 40 per cent of the country's population. At least 40 million people of the country are currently facing extreme poverty with no work and miserable buying capacity now. Consequently poverty is widespread and considered as the biggest socioeconomic problem by the government, the international donor community and independent observers.

There seems to be a number of structural factors behind the prevailing nature and dynamics of poverty. The major reasons are the unequal distribution of productive assets, inequitable distribution of income, massive underemployment, low levels of human resource development and imperfect local markets. These economic factors, together with the unjust social system, a low level of law and order and lack of good governance, reinforce each other and create critical obstacles for human development.

2.2 Access to and quality of public services

Developing human capabilities is regarded both as an end and as a means of development. For example, literacy and education (especially female education) make wide-ranging contributions not only to economic growth but also to demographic change, social equality, political democracy, and many other aspects of development. Similarly, good health is a fundamental basis of the quality of life as well as of social progress.

The commitment and obligation of the state to provide basic services to its citizens is enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh. The Constitution mandates that: "it shall be a fundamental responsibility of the state to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens- (a) the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care (Article: 15)". Bangladesh is responsible for creating an environment for its citizens that allows them to improve their quality of life through access to health, education and other basic services. Apart from constitutional mandates, Government is also obligated to adopt necessary legal and budgetary provisions to provide basic services to its people as it has ratified and showed highest commitment to uphold different international covenants, charters and proposals including the UN. Public spending on Essential Services (ES) is crucial to achieving MDG targets for Bangladesh. Spending on education, health and water-sanitation are seemed to be directly linked with almost all the major MDGs.

Poor public spending on basic human services contributes to the rising level of poverty. In 2007, public spending on education and health were 2.33 and 1.06 percent of GDP respectively. On the other hand, access to and quality of these services are still poor. In particular, the poor and marginalized are more deprived in terms of accessing to these services. However, the current global policy regime that promotes privatization of basic services has already been accepted by the government and policies and projects are designed in that manner further denied the rights of the people in general and poor and marginalized in particular. The process of privatization not only ignores the rights of people over public services but also contributes to increasing the level of disparity between the rich and the poor.

One of the major causes of poor spending on essential services is external debt servicing which creates pressure on increased budgetary allocation for essential services as GoB is spending more on external debt servicing than education or health. In 2007, Bangladesh had to pay US\$1551.3 million for external debt servicing which is 18% of total government expenditure. During the same year, public spending on education and health were 16.5% and 7.4% of total spending respectively. Besides, the policies of privatization were imposed under the conditionality of external debt.

2.3 Food security and the rights of the farmers

The concept of food security refers to a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that's their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life. On the other hand, food sovereignty is defined as the right of the people and sovereign states to democratically determine their own agriculture and food policy. Like many poor countries, Bangladesh has already surrendered its food sovereignty to global markets when it adopted the IFI dictated agricultural market liberalization policy sine mid-nineties of the last century. Farmers have lost their control over agri-inputs such as seed, fertilizer and irrigation in particular fully depending on market controlled by big multi-nationals and local traders.

In addition, rising oil and food prices globally has brought about adverse impact over poor farmers. The prices of rice, for instance, nearly tripled in the first four months of 2008. Study (April 2008) showed that number of people living below the poverty line was on the rise in recent times due to exorbitant increases in food prices. Researchers have shown that at least at least 60 per cent of the country's population at present takes much less calories than required.

Farmers of Bangladesh now no longer determine what they want to produce rather it's the market that dictates what to do. A fully market-led agriculture policy not only denied the rights of the farmers but also potentially contributes to exacerbating the situation food crisis being helpless in the face of market-shocks.

2.4 Governance & Human Rights

The process of democracy and governance should be seen in the light of its socio-economic process and functioning of institutions associated with. In fact, the socio-economic structure, development policies and processes ultimately determine the nature of democracy and governance. Good governance promotes fundamental and universal human rights. Principles of good governance allow people to pursue their lives in a just, equitable and democratic society.

In Bangladesh, since the return to democratic rule in 1991, the parties in power gradually took advantage of their position to capture and strengthen the partisan hold on state institutions and public administration by developing a system of patronage and dependencies. The winner-takes-all

system that developed in Bangladesh gave no incentives to change the formal framework of the state and to reform the governance system. As the party in power was the system's immediate beneficiary, the only changes it was interested in making were to assure its return to office in the next elections. The opposition waited, maintained its networks and prepared to win elections the next time around and then capture its share of benefits. Thus, the consensus between parties over the rules of the game continued with periodic outbursts of violence and turmoil which intensified before elections.

Multiparty administrators in the local governments preclude emergence of exclusive politics and ensures participation of diverse political groups in the governance of the country. In the absence of elected local governments, "winners take it all" syndrome may create a suffocating situation for the excluded groups. This in turn precipitates confrontational politics ridden with agitations and violence. Experiences of Bangladesh in the last few years conform to this scenario.

Decentralized strong local government system is a precondition for institutionalizing democracy and good governance. In Bangladesh, the functions of LGIs are not clearly defined, functionaries are not adequate, lack of fund to carry out the functions already defined and LGIs have lack of freedom and autonomy to make local level planning and implementation.

The situation of human rights is a serious concern in Bangladesh. Denial of rights creates poverty and inequality. Over the years violence against women and children remains a serious problem. Women remained in a subordinate position in society, and the government did not act effectively to protect their basic rights. Half of its population still lives on less than US 1 Dollar a day and 83% on less than US 2 Dollar a day. Inequality and disparity are seen pervasive; the top 5% receive 30% national income; the poorest 5% receives only a meager 0.67%.

iii. Violence & Terrorism:

The issues of violence and terrorism are particularly significance to the state of governance in Bangladesh. There is no country in the South Asia region that has remained untouched by terrorist attacks. Despite this, there has been little coordinated action, or any other form of meaningful cooperation. The region has become a battleground for international terrorism and within each state there are numerous non-state actors and terrorist organizations, which have been fighting the State, causing the death of innocent men, women and children in addition to damage to state property. These terrorism will destroy the internal harmony among the people of different religion and belief and also among the states of South Asia.

2.5 Rising voices, challenging hegemony

Over the last two decades or so, the world has witnessed a new brand of social movements that vehemently challenged the dominant development paradigm that robbed the rights of the people over their resources putting people at the mercy of the market forces. It has successfully challenges the hegemonic role played by the global financial institutions that shapes and reshapes the contours of national government's policies due to their sheer economic power and knowledge hegemony. Communities, farmers groups, trade unions, youths, women movements, indigenous groups etc. are at the forefront of these new social movements to develop a new paradigm of development that essentially strongly adheres to the Human Rights Framework.

3. Major issues and concerns

- i. The constitution of Bangladesh unequivocally states that the State shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens and shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality to ensure equitable distribution of wealth among citizens and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic¹. In spite of all such policy commitments, almost half of the population still continues to live below the poverty line with very limited access to some of the basic amenities of life.
- ii. Local Government Institutions (LGIs) are being regarded as necessary stage between the common citizen and the central state. LGIs also be treated as ‘load management’ mechanism for accelerating development efforts. Though the people’s at the grassroots also feel good by having opportunity for closer interaction with the government at their door steps compare to remote central state, in Bangladesh still it is not regarded and respected fully as effective, functional and credible service delivery mechanism. The functions of LGIs are not clearly defined, functionaries are not adequate, lack of fund to carry out the functions already defined and LGIs have lack of freedom and autonomy to make local level planning and implementation. Establishing decentralized strong local government system is a precondition for institutionalizing democracy and good governance.
- iii. SUPRO views human rights as a value system capable of strengthening democratic communities and nations through its emphasis on accountability, reciprocity, and people's equal and informed participation in the decisions that affect their lives.
- iv. Creating an informed citizenry conscious about their rights and entitlements are crucially important for bringing about good governance at all levels of society.
- v. The issue of violence and terrorism needs to be addressed through peace movements linking with regional and international initiatives.
- vi. Neo-liberal development paradigm and policies propagated and imposed by the powerful global institutions and countries have adversely affected the life and livelihoods of the poor people living in developing and poor countries. It has been proved that these policies and associated governance failure are the main culprits of regenerating poverty both at national and global level. The policies of neo-liberalism are being imposed with tied aid and debt.
- vii. Large-scale liberalization, deregulation and privatization have diminished the rights and entitlements of the poor people putting them at the mercy of market in general and big-businesses in particular. A market-led agricultural policy has created the conditions for denying the rights of the farmers and compounding the situation of food crisis. The biggest challenge is to reclaim the rights of the farmers and save environment and ecology.
- viii. Despite extreme poverty, climate-related disasters and high levels of debt, Bangladesh does not meet the criteria for debt cancellation under HIPC initiatives. There is now real danger

¹ Articles 15, 19, 16, 9 and 10, 20(2) and 22 and 21(2) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

that the impact of global financial recession will lead Bangladesh into greater economic problems and debt crisis. Bangladesh's economy relies heavily on garments exports and this is where the main risk lies. And Bangladeshi remittances may be hit by economic decline in the Middle East, which have been exposed to the financial crisis. If aid level declines, as many predict, this would have a significant effect on Bangladesh. To address the effects of recession, Bangladesh debt must be cancelled 100% and Bangladesh required unconditional ODA to meet the basic needs of its people.

- ix. The adverse effect of climate change has become a major concern for Bangladesh. It has severely affected the life and livelihoods of hundreds and thousands families living particularly in the coastal areas potentially creating a large number of environmental refugees in the country.
- x. Global grassroots experiences are challenging the present-day development paradigm and orthodoxy through their practical actions and knowledge. Bringing all these voices together and making an effective micro-macro linkage for developing an alternative has become an imperative for the grassroots social movements.

4. About the Organization

4.1 Genesis and Evolution of SUPRO

SUPRO was founded as a forum of grassroots NGOs in 2000 one year before the 8th parliament election in Bangladesh, and as a direct result of a collaborative analysis and efforts of local NGOs engaged in fighting poverty and injustice to campaign for democratization aimed at developing pro-poor policy changes at national level. After initiating a face to face consultation process among numerous districts level NGOs, the Campaign for Political Reforms (CAPRE) and its policy making body 'National Council' was formed. CAPRE received considerable attention from political leaders and policy makers on issues raised by the network and participating citizens.

Due to limitations of the network as an CSO entity, which was reviewed by national council in the beginning of 2002, the national council finally changed its strategic direction including the name of this network to *Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan* (Campaign for Good Governance) v *acronym in bangla SUPRO*.

The founding member organizations are: NRDS-Noakhali, Swaunnayan- Rajshahi, Wave Foundation-Chuadanga, COAST Trust-Bhola, BNNRC-Dhaka, Rupantar-Khulna, Setu-Kushtia, Solidarity-Kurigram, YPSA-Chittagong, VOICE-Dhaka, Sodesh-Satkhira, Pave-Bogra, SDS-Sariatpur, Come to Work-Dinajpur, SPOSP-Moulvibazar, PPS-Pabna, Swabalomby Unnayan Samity-Netrakona, Darpan-Comilla, WE-Jenaidah, RIO-Syhet.

From the very beginning, SUPRO took progressive position upholding the rights of marginalized people and community by facilitating local NGOs for grassroots activism thereby building capacity to integrate rights based approach. SUPRO worked to strengthen a national network of grassroots NGOs working to establish economic, social and cultural rights of poor and marginalized people in the society through facilitating activism at grassroots, national and global level. SUPRO critically analyzed global and national rules, regulations and policies to facilitate grassroots activism to make those work for the marginalized and excluded. For bringing about pro-poor policy and associated institutional reform SUPRO engaged itself in campaign, mobilization and advocacy on PRSP process, national budget tracking, economic justice, trade justice, climate justice, IFIs policies, debt cancellation and ODA. It was able creating good examples of work by the grassroots NGOs in mobilizing on policy issues at national level while building impetus for micro level dialogue to protect the rights of marginalized people.

In 2004, the National Council of SUPRO was reorganized, on the eve of formal registration, as a Trust aiming to have a legal and independent identity. Since inception, the secretariat has been hosted by the COAST Trust, a National Council member of SUPRO. Later in 2003 a separate secretariat was established as per NC decision to promote the network gradually as an independent entity. The full-fledged secretariat was reorganized and a new recruitment was made in 2006. In September 2007, the network received registration from NGO Bureau of GOB to receive funds from abroad.

At present, SUPRO works with more than 600 grassroots NGOs and CSOs in 46 districts in an effort to aspire to the human rights based society. The national council is now consist of 20 members having 7 are women activists. The national council elected 9 members Executive Board to provide guidance and policy direction to the secretariat staff members.

4.2 Alliance & Networking

During the last couple of years SUPRO has successfully pulled together different organizations and networks to make concerted efforts for desired policy changes. In many occasions, it organized joint programs and sought solidarity and support not only from the NGO community but also from diverse civil society organizations, research institutions, networks and professional bodies. Strong relationship with influential political leaders and parliamentarians both from House and Opposition has given SUPRO a strong-footing in the advocacy work in Bangladesh.

At the international level, SUPRO always participates in the World Social Forum and raises voices against IFI roles and its adverse impact on people's life and livelihood. It actively participated in world social movement against neo-liberal globalization took place in different parts of the world. While fighting against neo-liberal globalization for a just world order, SUPRO has developed solidarity and partnership with a number of international organizations and institutions of great repute. At national level, SUPRO is a member of PFM-the GCAP initiated alliance in Bangladesh, Amar Odhikar Campaign (AOC), at regional level SUPRO have networking relation with South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), and at international level SUPRO is a member of Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP) and also have networking relation with Jubilee South, Jubilee Netherlands and Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD).

4.3 Partnership and Support

Since inception SUPRO has initiated a number of campaigns mostly on Promoting good governance and Human Rights, campaign against the impact neo-liberalism, pro-poor policy changes and on participatory budget. Christian Aid UK, Cordaid, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), and Action Aid Bangladesh supported these campaigns.

With the support from OXFAM Novib, SUPRO is building capacity of activist's for equity and justice and running a campaign for debt cancellation and essential services under two separate projects. The major activities of these two projects are:

- Campaign for participatory budget
- Campaign for economic justice
- Aligning campaign with international civil society movements
- Participatory standard setting and self assessment of NGO governance
- Capacity building of SUPRO members to influence policy and

Major successes

- Creating awareness and popularizing budget analysis both at grassroots and national level
- The strong PRSP campaign compelled government to introduce provision for grassroots consultation
- SUPRO well-known as an organization promoting alternatives to neo-liberal development paradigm and pro-poor policy advocates
- Popularized the MDG issues and successfully questioned the External debt cancellation issue linking it with the process of attaining MDGs in general and ESs in particular
- Successfully sensitized various stakeholders on Human Rights issues and good governance to a great extent
- Demonstrated efficiency in bringing grassroots voices into the national and international forums on various issues such as external debt, MDG and budget allocation.
- A number of influential policy actors and politicians are motivated and count on SUPRO for its consistent advocacy for pro-poor policy changes
- Popularized the demand for debt cancellation and claiming ODA target of 0.7% of GNI of developed countries without any conditionality

practice changes

- Campaign for debt cancellation and essential services
- Grassroots mobilization: micro-macro linkage

Besides, SUPRO is implementing a campaign program supported by Article 19 on promoting access to information.

SUPRO follows participatory process in decision making and implementation of its activities. It facilitates micro level activism linking with macro level policy changes through capacity building of grassroots actors. SUPRO builds the capacity of grassroots NGOs and local level civil society groups in order to raise *their* voice against marginalization and exclusion.

4.4 Major accomplishments

Since inception SUPRO has initiated a number of campaigns, fostered advocacy work and building linkages between the collective effort of network members, and local, national and international level activism. Promoting good governance, Human Rights and pro-poor policy changes have been the main focus of its activities. It successfully intervened in the following areas with advocacy and mobilization efforts.

i. Promoting good governance practices

Campaign to promote democratic culture and non-confrontational politics gained popular participation among grassroots CSO activists, local political leaders and national level actors and engaged them voluntarily in policy reform discourse in a non-partisan manner in 2000. During the Local Government Election in 2003, SUPRO initiated peoples monitoring mechanism in 30 districts with voluntary participation of a large number of activists. At the national level SUPRO advocated for preventing political candidates to use adolescents under the age of 16 in election campaign. The Election Commission accepted and included it in the code of conduct for elections.

ii. Pro-poor policy reform

While the government decided to prepare PRSP in 2002 for the first time, SUPRO launched a Campaign to make it participatory and to ensure grassroots participation in the formulation process. SUPRO mobilized CSOs and local level policy makers by organizing discussions in 46 districts to mobilize people's opinion on poverty issues, recommendations sent to finance minister and organized dialogues for ensuring peoples participation in PRSP formulation process to make it a pro-poor one. The campaign proved successful as government introduced provision to hold consultation at the grassroots level during 2002-03. SUPRO critically analyses the PRSP documents putting its recommendations while producing a Bangla version of the same that successfully attracted a large audience to interact on this important planning document. Similar activities are going being carried out as far as the second PRSP is concerned.

Some important learning

- Authentic information, valid arguments and people's mobilization are fundamental for successful policy advocacy
- Gender as a cross cutting issue should be integrated in all program activities
- Proper documentation, monitoring and evaluation should be in place to develop the effectiveness of the programs
- More resources are needed to effectively implement program activities at the grassroots level.

iii. Public expenditure, budget tracking and MDG monitoring

In 2006, SUPRO launched National Budget Campaign aiming to ensure reflection of pro-poor agenda as well as grassroots demands in National Budget. One of the principle objectives of such campaign was to develop the capacities of grassroots NGOs and CSOs to analyze the national budget. SUPRO successfully conducted pre-budget and post budget consultations in 46 districts in 2006 and 2007. Through these consultations the 460 grassroots NGOs and CSOs successfully monitored PRSP commitments and sent their opinion and pro-poor demands (i.e. increased allocation in education, health, agriculture etc) to the Finance Ministry.

Public expenditure and budget tracking have become one of the major areas of SUPRO activities that attracted the attention of both media and civil society including policy makers. In addition the network monitors the MDG progress in all major areas and publishes reports for creating awareness and policy makers. It involves participatory approach to monitor social sector development while comparing it with the resources allocated by the government. For creating greater awareness among stakeholders SUPRO has recently conduct a comprehensive study of External Debt situation of Bangladesh. Keeping in view the MDG target (Goal 8), the study successfully compared the debt serving cost with the public expenditure on basic services such as health, education and water-sanitation.

iv. Essential services campaign

SUPRO firmly believes that access to and quality of basic human or Essential Services (i.e. health, education etc.) are crucial to poverty alleviation and social development. Equitable access to these services by the poor and marginalized is of particular importance as far as MDG attainment is concerned. Over the years SUPRO has been successful to popularize the demands for increased allocation for essential services and stop privatization of essential public services.

v. Linking grassroots to national and international level

SUPRO organize and mobilize grassroots voices first as its fundamental working strategy and moving it forward to the national level for required changes in the direction. For example, budget tracking, PRSP monitoring, MDG campaign are being organized at the grassroots level first and moves upward. However, Issues such as Climate Change, Trade Justice, External Debt cancellation etc. requires international campaign alongside the national one. SUPRO has been involved in such international campaign over the years to raise voices at the international level developing partnership with like-minded organizations like Jubilee South, Jubilee Netherlands and APMDD.

It actively participated in several civil society campaigns against unjust WTO rules; campaign against WB-IMF hegemony etc. took place in different parts of the world. At the regional level, SUPRO mobilized the SAARC civil societies to unite and to hold governments accountable for MDG and SDGs to serve the interest of poor people of South Asia.

vi. Challenging hegemony of dominant discourse

Over the years, SUPRO has successfully established itself as a strong network of grassroots voices that challenges current development paradigm imposed by the IFIs. It seeks to develop alternatives to present-day development processes that adversely affect the life and livelihood of the poor and marginalized. It has successfully challenges the hegemonic role played by the global financial institutions that shapes and reshapes the contours of national government's policies due to their sheer economic power and knowledge hegemony.

4.5 Organizational Strengths and Opportunities

Over the years, SUPRO has achieved recognition from grassroots campaigners and policy makers in relation to its people centric advocacy which indicates its strength. Along with its strengths, SUPRO identified some areas for improvement, opportunities and threats at the strategic planning workshop:

Strengths

- Non partisan image
- Critical mass at district level
- Grassroots linkage and activism
- Having good mobilization capacity
- Transparency and accountability of organizational governance
- Prompt/instant response on emerging policy issues
- Critical analysis and positioning on policy issues
- Committed and promising staff
- Good publications and IEC materials
- Strong policy advocacy at national level-Good linkage with policy leaders
- Good relation with media and coverage
- Regional and international linkage/networking

Areas of Improvement

- Limitation in designing advocacy and campaign
- Improper distribution of workload
- Weak publicity of activities/achievements
- Inadequate monitoring mechanism
- Lack of initiative to strengthen and reform the district committees
- All district secretary are not equally influential
- All district are not equally active
- Donor dependency
- Weak relationship with international civil society movements
- Overlapping of issues of campaign with network members

Opportunities

- Scope of expansion to whole country as an effective civil society network
- Opportunity to be developed as capacity building institute of grassroots actors
- Acceptance and positive support of concerned stakeholders -Government & private sector
- Opportunity to develop as national level influential actor
- Scope to develop consensus on national issues within conflicting power blocks

Threats

- Network members could deviate from SUPRO's spirit and values
- Conflict among the partners due to having overlapping of campaign issues
- Rise of fundamentalism

5. Strategic Planning 2009-2013

As a national network of grassroots NGOs in Bangladesh, SUPRO formulated its vision, mission and strategic objectives to enable a pro-poor policy change focus where grassroots NGOs can effectively act in upholding the rights of marginalized people on Human Rights Based Approach of development.

Vision, Mission, Strategic Objectives and Values

Vision Statement

SUPRO envisions a participatory democratic society based on human rights principles that adhere to equity and justice for all.

Mission statement

The mission of SUPRO is to facilitate CSOs and Citizen Actors for collective actions towards establishing economic, social, cultural, political and environmental rights as well as to bringing about accountable and transparent governance system at all spheres of society.

Strategic Objectives

1. Strengthening the network of grassroots organizations and building capacity for claiming rights to development;
2. Undertaking advocacy and mobilization initiatives reflecting grassroots voice and facilitating micro-macro linkage to influence policy change for the poor and marginalized;
3. Building critical awareness among various stakeholders to promote human rights and participatory governance in order to attain a more inclusive and egalitarian society;
4. Developing alternative intellectual and policy discourses challenging existing neo-liberal orthodoxy and its subsequent ideas, policies and programs;
5. Building broader alliances of CSOs to influence the policy makers and government to take strong pro-poor positions in negotiations with IFIs and WTO

Our Values:

SUPRO is committed to values of Equity, Justice, democracy, participation and accountability.

6. Strategic Framework

6.1 Priority Areas

Taking into consideration the present socio-economic and political context and challenges, SUPRO has identified the following priority areas of work that could potentially contribute to attaining the mission of the organization. From the perspective of the organization these priority areas of work is also regarded as Major Programs of the organization that involves various kinds of mobilization, campaign, research, and advocacy linking grassroots with national and international.

Each thematic area or program involves specific purpose and intended outcomes.

i. Governance, human rights and right to information

Establishing decentralized strong local government system is a precondition for institutionalizing democracy and good governance. In Bangladesh, the functions of LGIs are not clearly defined, functionaries are not adequate, lack of fund to carry out the functions already defined and LGIs have lack of freedom and autonomy to make local level planning and implementation. The program of this theme will be campaigning and advocacy for establishing effective local government system, enhancing the capacity of local government to ensure responsive governance and public services at local level; and also to strengthen the capacity of poor and marginalized people for better public services through organizing, mobilization and engagement.

On the other side right to information seems to be highly important for creating informed citizenry to establish accountable and transparent system of governance at all spheres of society. An informed citizenry guided by HR framework is regarded as one of the fundamental precondition for attaining good governance in Bangladesh. This program also intends to contribute to creating an informed citizenry capable of making the present system of governance more democratic, transparent and accountable.

Intended outcomes

- Influenced government policies to establish responsive and effective local governance system
- Practice of participatory budget planning introduced at the grassroots level by the LGIs
- Enhanced capacity of LGIs for responsive governance
- Capacity of poor people enhanced for materializing rights from government institutes especially from LGIs
- Transparency and accountability of the duty-bearers prompted;
- Public officials are sensitized on issues relating to Human Rights and democratic system of governance;
- Critical awareness among different stakeholders raised on Right to information;
- Human rights defender groups developed and active at the grassroots level;
- Developed capacity for peace building and harmonization

ii. Ensuring Essential Services (ESs) for all

Developing human capabilities and reducing the level of poverty essentially require providing basic human services or ESs (i.e. health, education etc.) for all. The State has the commitment and Constitutional obligation to provide all these services to its citizens. Access and quality of these services are highly important particularly for the poor and marginalized. Greater citizen actions are needed to ensure relevant policies and practices to make these services available to all. The program

intends to serve the purpose of ensuring ESs to all by its various research, campaign and mobilization activities.

Intended outcomes

- Right and access to and quality of health and education enhanced for all especially for the women and children;
- Public expenditure on ESs increased and monitored;
- Policy makers sensitized for cancellation of external debt for increasing the allocation of public resources on ESs
- Different stakeholders sensitized on issues relating to the importance and equitable distribution of ESs with particular focus on the poor and vulnerable population;

iii. Food sovereignty, climate justice and rural livelihood

It has been successfully proved by the recent food crisis that liberalized agricultural policy regime is not a solution to food crisis as it essentially gives immense power to a few profit-mongering TNCs causing the vulnerability of the life and livelihoods of the millions. Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of such policies where rights of farmers are continuously denied making issue of food sovereignty a distant dream. Moreover, global climate change has adversely affected the livelihood of the small farmers in Bangladesh. Millions of small farmers living particularly in the coastal areas are severely affected as crops are damaged. The situation severe creates food shortage and points to the global justice on climate change. The program intends to raise these issues and concerns at different national, regional and global level through organizing voices from the grassroots.

Intended outcomes

- Influenced government policies and practices to ensure sustainable livelihood for all;
- Stakeholders sensitized and raised voices on climate justice, food sovereignty and right to food /livelihood at different national, regional and global level;
- Influenced poverty reduction and rural development policies to ensure rural livelihood/Policies of sustainable agriculture with farmer's rights prompted
- Equitable access to natural resources and common properties enhanced;
- Market-led agricultural and food policies revisited by the policy makers;

iv. Aid, Debt, Trade and Role of IFIs

The status of Bangladesh, as periphery of the global capitalism gives an immense authority to the global north and multilateral agencies to shape economy and polity. All major economic policies have been formulated in line with the strategic framework of these global agencies, i.e., the World Bank, IMF, ADB or WTO without any knowledge or consent of the people. Second, unlike many other peripheral countries, Bangladesh has been enjoying a 'democratic' rule, i.e., elected governments under a parliamentary system since 1991. Nevertheless, the parliament was never allowed to lead the country; not to formulate, not even discuss on crucial policies determining the fate of the country. The global north and multilateral bodies using trade, aid and debt as weapons to impose economic policies on Bangladesh for the interest of MNCs. The program intends campaigning for debt cancellation and critical response on policies and programs of IFIs to create pressure for unconditional aid and debt cancellation through involving national and global actors.

Intended outcomes

- Increased pressure on GOB to demand for effective aid without conditionality from development partners especially for the achievements of MDGs
- Increased government capacity through civil society engagement to have pro-poor negotiation at WTO and IFIs
- Build alliance with policy advocates for debt cancellation of Bangladesh at national, regional and international level
- Increased representation from Bangladesh in regional and global civil society movements to create pressure on intergovernmental bodies, multilateral institutes and UN for economic justice and good governments

v. Building capacities and perspectives of the grassroots NGOs

The strength of SUPRO as a network of grassroots NGOs fundamentally lies in developing the capacities and perspectives of its partners working exclusively at the grassroots level. Successful advocacy, mobilization and campaign essentially require improving not only their advocacy and campaign edge but also enhancing their internal management system and capacities. It involves revisiting and developing several institutional policies to make these organizations more accountable and transparent to its immediate stakeholders. This program intends to contribute to this venture through various activities.

Intended outcome

- RBA as a process of organizational development integrated;
- Capacity as social activists enhanced;
- Enhanced capacity of grassroots campaigner on policy advocacy
- Various institutional policies (for example, Gender & Financial Management) developed/revisited;
- Continuous effort to improve organizational management capacity (for example, ICT) prompted to make organizations more transparent and accountable.

6.2 Implementation Strategy

There will have 4 program facilitation units to implement the programs under the thematic issues. Besides the 4 program facilitation units, there will have 2 program support units.

Program Facilitation Unit:

a. Policy Research and Advocacy

The program unit will conduct literature review and policy research to develop policy briefs for campaign and advocacy. The unit will develop evidence based advocacy tools and initiate advocacy activities at micro and macro level. However, it should be clearly mentioned here that SUPRO does not a research organization per se. For the purpose of influencing policies the organization requires authentic information and valid arguments relating to the issues it deals with. Study and research come into play in this regard. The major activities of this unit are:

- Identifying issues conduct action research and design advocacy
- Develop policy briefs based on research findings
- Develop capacity of campaigners on research methodology
- Design campaign and advocacy program
- Develop campaigners on advocacy and mobilization
- Lobbying policy makers for pro-people policy change initiatives
- Bringing conceptual clarity, background papers on emerging issues

a. Networking and Mobilization

The unit will provide membership services, networking, campaign and mobilization activities. The major activities of this unit are:

- Maintain regular contact with district campaigners and follow up the day to day activities
- Providing recommendations for capacity building of district campaigners
- Updating database of networking members and their profile
- Establishing networks and building alliances with likeminded groups and allies
- Developing effective networking guidelines
- Identifying and maintaining regular communication and relationship with concerned stakeholders, opinion builders and policy makers
- Update database of concerned policy makers
- Organizing effective mobilization through ensuring the participation of concerned actors at seminar, human chain and at other programs

c. Capacity building and Training

The unit will identify the capacity gaps of the CS organizations in promoting Peoples Organizations and grassroots activism for policy and practice change. Providing need-based training will be one of the important activities of this Unit.

The major activities of this unit are:

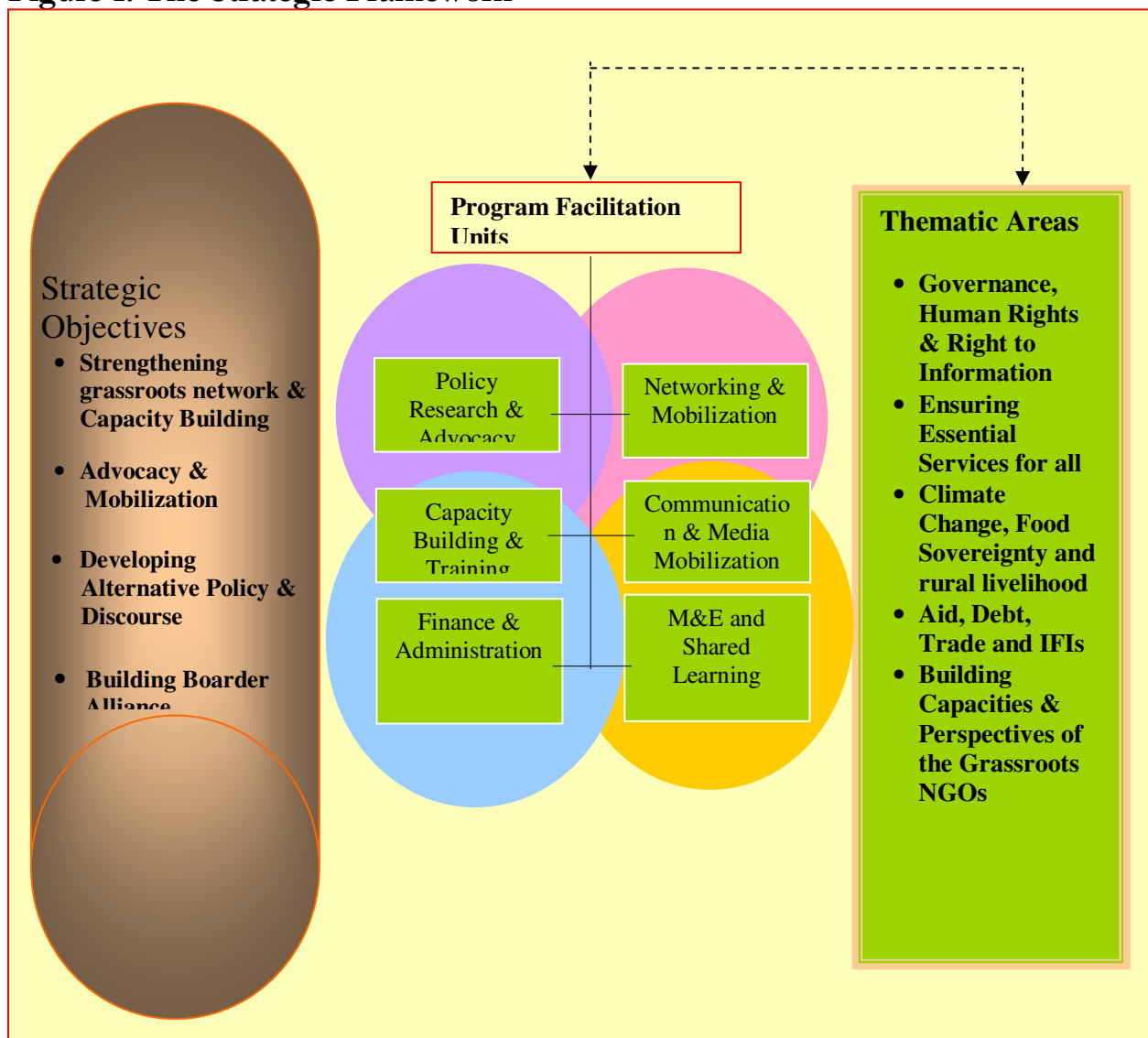
- Developing training manuals, materials and facilitating capacity building activities
- Printing, publication and disseminating campaign materials
- Conducting regular mentoring of training, follow-up and refreshers training
- Developing IEC materials
- Publication of annual reports, calendar and other organizational materials
- Strengthening SUPRO resource center

d. Communication and Media mobilization

The unit will produce the campaign materials, newsletters and other publications for influencing the opinion. Developing Web-page and promoting Internet-based campaign will be another important task. Effective media campaign on various issues will also be included under this Unit.

- Mobilizing mass media for effective advocacy
- Designing effective media advocacy
- Capacity building of grassroots campaigners on media advocacy
- Publication of news letter
- Developing and updating web-page
- Updating documentations of member NGOs, best practices, media cover stories
- Establishing and maintaining in national, regional and international arenas

Figure 1: The Strategic Framework



7. Organizational Structure

7.1 Networking Membership

Membership of SUPRO is open to all NGOs of Bangladesh that are legally registered, politically non-partisan, based at district level. The NGOs that are eligible for membership are the ones that are committed to people centered and right-based development approach.

7.2 Organization & Management Structure

National Convention

National Convention will be held every two years attended by the district campaign leaders. National convention will review the programs and recommend future directions. The convention will provide policy directions and guidelines for AGM.

Annual General Meeting

SUPRO holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) every year attended by the NC members. The NC is the supreme body of SUPRO. The AGM provides the overall direction for SUPRO's work, approves the annual report of Executive Committee and the audit report, and endorses SUPRO's activities for next year. Besides, the AGM elects the members of Executive Committee.

Executive Board

The Executive Board (EB) is comprised of 9 members elected by the NC members for 3 years period. EB oversees the implementation of programs and prepares organization development policies. EB members serve voluntarily in their personal capacity for the organization. The EB also appoints the staff in the secretariat. EB holds meeting in every 3-months, review the progress of activities and provide policy guidelines for future direction. There are 5 portfolios in EB; Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, General Secretary, Treasurer, and Member.

District Campaign Committee

SUPRO District Campaign Committee (DCC) implements all the activities at district level coordinated by district coordinator /secretary. DCC coordinate and maintain relationship with secretariat and manage programs at district level involving the networking members. District committee involves local MPs and government officials to influence policies and also make linkages with national level actors supported by secretariat in order to make macro-micro linkages. The portfolios of the committee are: Chairperson, District Campaign Coordinator and General Member. SUPRO secretariat makes agreement with the organization of District Campaign Coordinator. District Coordinator submits activity and financial reports to secretariat.

Thematic Working Group

In order to ensure participation of NC members in activities, 7 Thematic Working Group (TWG) were formed; these are:

- i. Food Sovereignty
- ii. Debt, Aid & Role of IFIs
- iii. International Trade & Foreign Direct Investment
- iv. Environment & Climate Justice
- v. Human Rights and Governance
- vi. Networking & Membership
- vii. Gender & Women Rights

The concerned TWG members will facilitate the activities and involve with secretariat staff in order to design campaign, framing the issue and taking position and will also join with activities at national, regional and international level.

Secretariat

The secretariat is responsible for day-to-day operation of the organization headed by a Director. Secretariat keeps live contact with the district campaigners. All program and support Units are collectively responsible for activities and accountable to the Executive Board. Besides the four program facilitation units (described in 6.2), there will have two program support units (Figure: Organization and Management Structure of SUPRO).

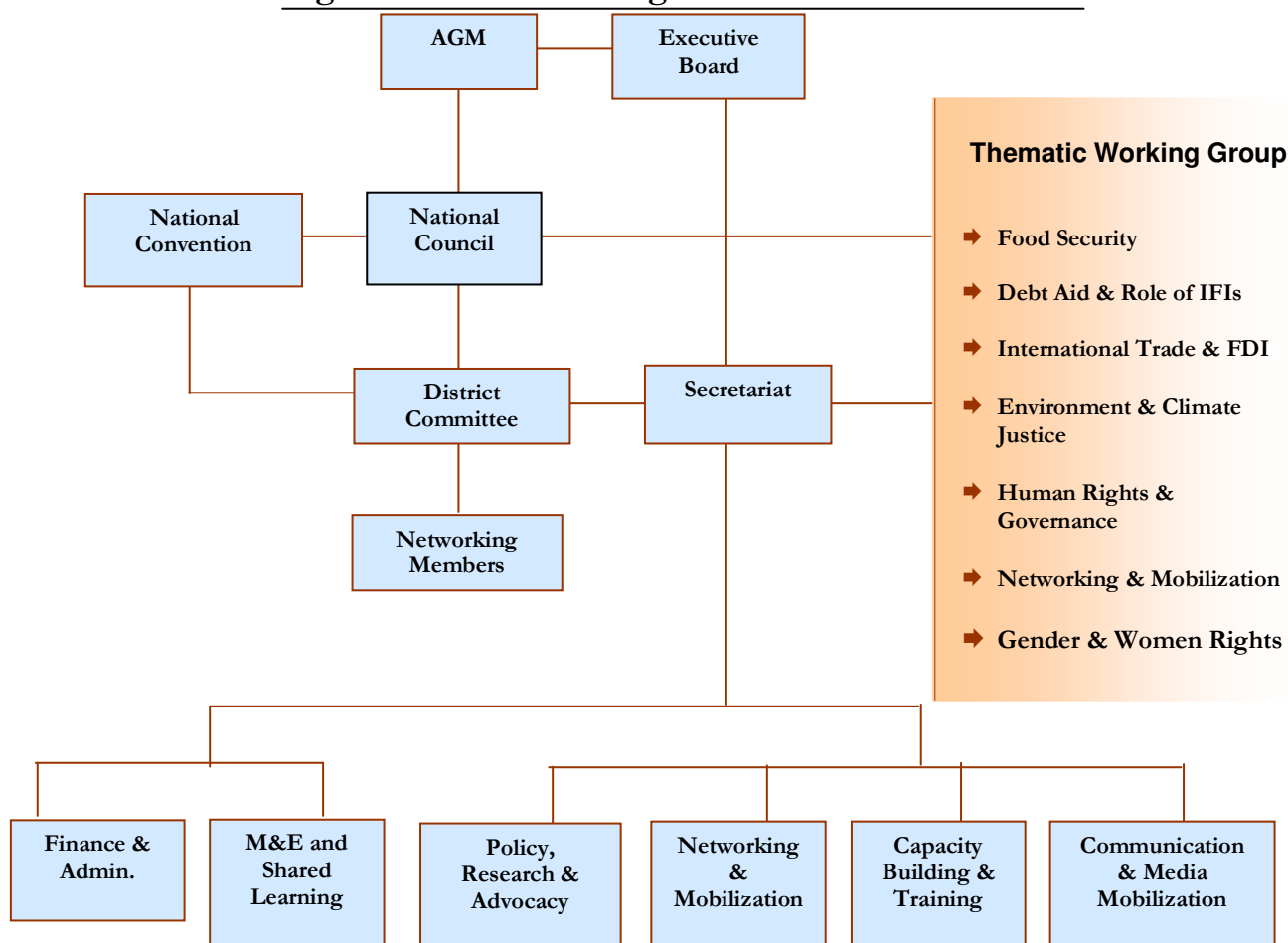
a. Administration and Finance

SUPRO secretariat maintains accounts centrally following double entry system guided by accounts manual. The district organization send original vouchers after implementing the program within 7 working days. Secretariat administration is being maintained by the guidelines of service rules.

b. Monitoring, Evaluation and Shared Learning

Monitoring, evaluation and shared learning unit is responsible for meeting the demands of the programs and projects in terms of affectivity and taking corrective measures. In addition, it has the responsibility to conduct internal evaluation, if necessary, and share outcomes and experiences among the campaigners and secretariat staff for further developing the program activities.

Organization and Management Structure of SUPRO



8. Strengthening Institutional Capacity

In order to succeed in delivering this strategic planning and achieving mission, we set ourselves the following five institutional objectives.

1. Strengthen staff capacity

Given the nature of the organization and its activities, SUPRO staffs are highly committed and upheld a global view in line with the organization. It is one of the biggest challenges before any organizations like SUPRO to bring about perfect-match between commitment and professionalism. It well-recognized in the strategic plan that staffs must be highly professional in term of skills and quality of the work while keeping firm on social commitment. It has also been noted that advocacy and mobilization not only requires particular skills and art but also seeks authentic research, information, appropriate documentation as well as intellectual support to a great extent. As we move forward, we will develop capacity of staff to promptly act on issues of people's concern and to impart necessary knowledge, skills and techniques on knowledge management (research, study, survey etc.) to carry out effective campaign and advocacy.

Staff performance need to be enhanced in four particular areas of work: a) development of communication materials and policy briefs, b) techniques relating to study, survey, report-card etc., c) media (particularly Internet) campaign, and d) designing campaign and advocacy particularly advocacy with legislators. It is also important to invest a substantive amount of resources in this endeavor and develop a coherent human resource development plan.

2. Strengthen network and alliances

SUPRO is well-recognized, both at home and abroad, as a rights-based net-work of grassroots NGOs who promote peoples voices and alternatives through its various activities through micro-macro linkages and also linking with like likeminded network, alliances at national, regional and international level. In order to strengthen the network, further clarifying the role of the Networking Members is needed in a more focused way to attain the shared objectives. Emphasis should be given to involve the relevant stakeholders i.e. parliament, politicians, influential actors in civil society etc. to act as effective constituencies in order to exercise their particular influence in campaign and advocacy to bring about desired changes. However, it seems to be one of the important imperatives for SUPRO to develop national and international alliances and networking in order to scale-up its activities at national and international level.

3. Strengthen Communications and Campaigns

Effective communications and campaigns will provide our messages to the general public, decision makers and supporters at local, national, regional and international level. In order to succeed, we need to build more and deeper relationships with local, national and international media. We need to develop creative and alternative communication tools like documentary film, alternative drama and song and innovative communications materials; we also need to build our capacity in campaigning and communicating through media and direct communication channels such as the internet and mobile networks. It is important to build a professional and innovative communications team for greater visibility, quality campaigns and communications.

4. Strengthen Structure, Systems, Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to succeed, we must strive to be accountable, effective and dynamic. The effectiveness and impact of our work depends on defined structure and systems. We will strengthen management structure to improve participatory decision-making, implementation and accountability. We will

promote organizational culture that encourages innovations, learning and sharing; which will enable us to respond rapidly changing and challenging external environment. We will involve more the members of thematic group in designing campaign and advocacy and strengthen their capacity to participate and respond at national and international level. We will strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems and reinforce our impact assessment capability to develop our understanding of how change happens.

5. Resource Mobilization & Financial Sustainability

Presently SUPRO is dependent on its strategic partners for necessary financial resource and technical support. The strategic plan of SUPRO has aimed at a comprehensive sustainability plan that should explore options to generate resources from local partners along with overseas partners. As a mission-driven organization, SUPRO should consider several options to achieve financial sustainability through diversify income sources such as selling publications, providing capacity building support to NGOs at local, national and regional level and also providing consultancy services.