Improved liveliness through Microenterprises in rural areas

India
Sambalpur, India
Eva Werding

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage:
Scaling
Budget:
$1 million - $5 million
Website:
http://www.biswa.org
Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

BISWA sees the vision in "Social Change with Inclusive Development" to be achieved by the mission of "Participatory development with equity, dignity and human rights for the unreached and underserved". This is what the organisation and all members and staff stand for.

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The Indian economy is characterised by a heavy dependence on agriculture as industries are concentrated in the urban areas and a highly skewed distribution of income and wealth. Poverty and unemployment are highly connected. The economic situation in the poorest state Orissa is fatal: 48% of the population lives under the poverty line. A high percentage of the working population depends on agriculture and related activities. In rural areas disguised unemployment prevails. People have a poor base of resources, a low level of capacity and limited access to financial and other support services. Especially women do not have enough opportunities to utilise their limited skills and resources. A measure to reduce the poverty can be the generation of additional adequate employment in rural areas.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

BISWA provides sustainable business development services to people organized in Self Help Groups (SHG) of about 14 persons generating employment and improving the quality of life for the underprivileged section of society. A special focus lies on women and youth. On the one hand, this is a Microfinance programme so that the SHGs can apply for loans to invest into their business ideas. On the other hand, compulsory and periodic skills-enhancement interventions make sure the beneficiaries can improve and use their skills and are up-to-date with market trends allowing them to leverage maximum benefit out of the programme. Networking with other SHGs and building common brands are further factors helping the people to strengthen their businesses. This Micromarketing allows them to be better connected so that they achieve better prices for their products. So people do not only receive money, but are furthermore supported to be able to carry out their Microenterprises successfully.

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

"BISWA Palliprativa" is a SHG based in the Kendrapara District, Orissa. The livelihood of the villagers was based on traditional subsidence agricultural practices and wage labour and thereby unable to ensure food and income through the year. Some women with a common perception of need and the will to act came forward searching for possible alternatives to improve the situation. With the support of BISWA, they founded the SHG. Motivated by collective approaches to thrift and credit among themselves they became confident to develop further towards financial independency. When they were found eligible in the BISWA microfinance scheme, they got a first loan for enterprise purposes. Having traditional proficiency in making handicraft from golden grass such as handbags, belts and jewelleries, they used the loan systematically for its commercial production and marketing. Handling this, they were actively supported by BISWA. The group-based approach was successful and they could pay back the loan in 6 instead of the granted 12 month. With strengthened confidence they availed another loan to establish a production unit for the golden grass products at large scale with the objective of a long-term livelihood option. It was a success: The products could be found in almost all nearby households. The group could reimburse the credit amount from the profit earned and improve their livelihood strongly. Furthermore, they gained respect in the community, a better social and economic status and an increasing participation in the decision making processes in the household and the village.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

With a wide network and the experience of now 18 years of work we can differentiate ourselves from many organizations coping with the same needs. Still, we normally do not see them as competitors as they have similar goals which should be in the spotlight. BISWA Network is one of our umbrella organizations, continuing to perform activities for strengthening partnership with NGOs nationwide. Its endeavours are mainly focused on coordination with partner NGOs and to enhance their ability to execute different operations in association with BISWA. In its area of activity BISWA Network has been able to evolve some new ideas which have been supportive in holding conducive relationship with partner NGOs and looking forward to further cultivate it for qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

Team

Founding Story

It all started as a small dream of an individual and then grew as a snowball. As a banker 17 years ago, Mr. Khirod Chandra Malick, founder Chairman, Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency (BISWA), worked in the western part of Odish and, realised the debilitating impact of real
poverty in the region. In fact, this was the turning point in his life, generating an inner urge to start a philanthropic Organisation with a group of like-minded people. Thus BISWA was born with a very well-defined Vision and Mission. It is now fully committed towards sustainable development of the poor people with special emphasis on women. During this period, the Organisation has expanded to 20 other states thereby acquiring the status of a prominent national level NGO. It has promoted 238 independent BISWA federations known as MBTs (Mutual Benefit Trusts).

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### About You

**Organization:**
Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency (BISWA)

**First Name**
Eva

**Last Name**
Werding

**Twitter URL**

**Facebook URL**

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### About Your Organization

**Organization Name**
Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency (BISWA)

**Organization Country**
OR, Sambalpur

**Country where this project is creating social impact**
OR

**Age of Innovator**
Over 34

**Gender of Innovator**
Male

**How long has your organization been operating?**
More than 5 years

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

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### Innovation

**How long have you been in operation?**
Operating for more than 5 years

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### Social Impact

**What solution(s) does your initiative address to help emerging entrepreneurs and small businesses grow and thrive in underserved communities? (select all applicable)**

Access to financing, Access to supply chains, Access to economic opportunity.

**What has been the impact of your solution to date?**

BISWA’s integrated approach has emerged as a successful means to holistic social development programmes by bringing convergence of Micro Finance, Micro Enterprise, Micro Insurance and Micro Marketing. Its development programmes address poverty eradication, livelihood promotion, basic health services, water and sanitation, education and gender equity. An analysis by our internal and external evaluators yields among others the employment generation and sustainable livelihood promotion in 1,273,702 households, an enhanced status of women through self-reliance, capacity building trainings etc. and an increase of social security to SHG members through micro insurance in life, health and asset. BISWA has trained 278,040 women to micro-entrepreneurs in skills of applique, incense-stick making, weaving, pottery and other livelihood skills. Resultantly, these women SHG members can generate commercial value utilising their traditional skills.

**What is your projected impact over the next 1-3 years?**

There is a concrete goal for 2015: We want to have created in total 1 million jobs. The women taking part in our programmes shall sustainably have improved their livelihood, have gained more self-reliance and an empowered status in family and society. From further projects we hope to have built 2 million toilets, 3 million water tap connections and 10 million trees. As a superior goal we have committed ourselves to the Millennium Goals of the United Nations.

**What barriers might hinder the success of your project? How do you plan to overcome them?**
A problem is the on-going uncertainty in the Microfinance Sector that can be a threat also for us, but as we offer an integrated program including mentoring, guidance and other social development projects we think, we can have a positive sight to the future. We are sure that responsible finance is the only working model in the Microfinance Sector – not only as vision, but also in terms of a pragmatic client protection and social performance management. Our strategic collaborations with government and various partnerships remain healthy and effective in delivering public goods to poor. We will further expand these relationships by long-term collaboration. The strategy is to create national level advocacy and attract multiple funding sources to multiply actions and scale up the interventions.

Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and track growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your six-month milestone

**Task 1**
Increase of the number of SHGs to about 90,000

**Task 2**
Increase of the number of clients (SHG-Members) to about 1,500,000

**Task 3**
Further development of the marketing network for the products

**Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone**

Expanding the concept of microenterprises to a larger number of people

Identify three major tasks you will have to complete to reach your 12-month milestone

**Task 1**
Increase of the number of SHGs to about 100,000

**Task 2**
Increase of the number of clients (SHG-Members) to about 1,700,000

**Task 3**
Identification of sales markets and further development of the marketing network for the products

**Sustainability**

**Tell us about your partnerships**

In our projects we are supported by a number of different promoters. From government departments (e.g. Odisha State Social Welfare Board), to bilateral and multilateral donors, to international and national NGOs (e.g. UNICEF, MISEREOR from Germany), to corporate bodies and civil society networks to local governments and peoples processes we find any kind of organization in our network. Furthermore we collaborate with banks and insurances to improve our projects. Furthermore, see above for more information about BISWA Network.

Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren’t specified within the list

Talent/Networking: We help the women in the SHGs to utilise their traditional skills and talents to improve their livelihood by providing access to financial services. We support them by special trainings giving them the opportunity to learn how they efficiently generate income with their skills. Furthermore, SHGs use the contacts to other groups to improve the effectiveness of their Marketing.

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