

Yuva Rural Association



STRATEGIC PLAN DOCUMENT

2016-20

Yuva (Rural) Association

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April. 2016 to March 2020

1. Genesis:

YUVA Rural Association (YRA) evolved out of the rural intervention initiated by YUVA- Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, Mumbai. YUVA initiated a process of capacity building through networking of grass-root voluntary development organizations in Vidarbha region in 1994 under which a Vidarbha Development Perspective Plan was prepared and implemented for a period of 6 years. It was experienced that apart from the networking and capacity building role, YUVA had to intervene directly on the ground and thus the rural interventions of YUVA got started in 1998. Slowly it became the rural unit of YUVA and in the year 2002 Yuva Rural Association was registered as independent organization under Society Registration Act of Madhya Pradesh.

YRA initiated direct interventions in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra mainly in issues revolving around overall rural development but by 2006-07 withdrew from MP and Gujarat due to lack of capable and committed local leadership. Since 2008-09 YRA has been focusing in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

YRA has established its own identity and credibility in the sector by experimenting and establishing successful models of overall rural transformation including the specific needs of the tribal population with their unique cultural and economic background. YRA's first Strategic Plan was developed in 2003. YRA intends to be a relevant organization in the changing context by experimenting and designing new models of interventions. In the recent years with rapid time socio-economic changes YRA intended to look back at the activities enumerated in the previous strategic plan, look at the successes and failures and design the new strategic plan to adapt to the changing context and the ensuing new policies-both nationally and internationally.

The core purpose of the new strategic plan is to provide broad guidelines to the organization in its interventions, programs, human resources, capacity building, resource mobilization, resource planning, financial planning, organizational structure, systems, values, leadership and work culture/style etc.

YRA is currently functioning on the basis of the earlier strategic plan prepared for the period 2011- 14. YRA did mid-term review of the earlier strategic plan twice but unfortunately could not up with a new strategic plan till Sept 2015. The earlier strategic plan was continued till March 2016. During the mid-term reviews that took place between Sept 2015 and Jan 2016 various processes were conducted like the analysis of present scenario including internal reality check, changes in political and economic framework etc. It was difficult to involve all stakeholders in the processes though ideally expected. So YRA involved representatives of communities, Government officials, consultants, and experts etc in the development of the new strategic plan that would be followed for the period April 2016 till March 2020.

During 2002 to 2011 YRA has established an image as learning, vibrant, transparent, accountable and value based policy advocacy organization. YRA has been instrumental in promoting and leading different campaigns in Maharashtra, especially on the issues of women, youth, farmers in the area of livelihood, governance and gender, and also has been

an active member in different national and state level networks and alliances on various issues involving its constituencies and the development themes mentioned above.

YRA has formed and nurtured several organizations and institutions of the constituent communities at local, district, regional and state level. It has built their capacities as an empowerment process. YRA has developed a cadre of volunteers in Vidarbha region who are the main drivers of the organization for achieving various goals. *YRA, right from the beginning, has been demonstrating new alternatives in the sector.*

2. Process of fourth strategic plan:

2.1. Background

The third Strategic Plan ended in 2014 but the next strategic plan could not be formulated prior to the expiry, mainly for two reasons. The major shift suggested in third plan of District as the operational unit proved tremendously unsuccessful for many reasons. It was planned that new initiatives will be taken at the district level and very few multi-district projects will be planned.. Unfortunately though at the central level multi district projects were not promoted and at the district level the teams found it very challenging to initiate new programs. The second reason was drastic cut down of financial resources due to strategic decisions of the main funding partner's. . In effect, many of the good and capable staff had to leave the organization as the inflationary pressures were not compensated by adequate salary hike.. The last two years was very hard for YRA to sustain due to these experiences and changes. YRA continued with the same Strategic Plan for implementation and decided to have the next Strategic Plan from April 2016 onwards till 2020.

The Chief Functionary, Mr. Datta Patil took the role of Change Agent and Mr. Mohan Surve, Member of Governing Council played the role of Facilitator. A detail note was prepared for review of the third strategic plan and all staff and some of the stakeholders including communities were involved in the review. Governing Council Members also were involved in the process.

2.2. Objectives of the process:

1. To revisit YRA's third strategic plan (2011-2014) and review it with a common understanding.
2. To create base for new strategic plan for YRA through collective understanding, inputs and commitments.
3. To prepare new strategic plan for the period of 2016 to 2020

2.3. Expectations from the process:

Summary of the relevance, positive and negative aspects of the last Strategic plan was done collectively. Achievements gained through the previous strategic plan in respect to the structures, systems, HR, governance and other stakeholders articulated collectively and accordingly created the base for the new strategic plan. Some of the key points reviewed were as follows:

- Review and analyze the mission and vision statement to gauge the appropriateness for YRA and rearticulate the same if required.
- Articulate present thematic areas after reviewing the lapses and achievements made and future need assessment.
- To decide upon the operational geographical area in the next plan.
- Scan the external environmental- socio-economic, political and cultural issues, trends and national & international policies as also local reality in the society out there.
- To get clear understanding and directions for the future strategic planning process.
- Final strategic plan document mandated by the Governing Council of YRA.
- Plan of action on the basis of the strategic plan by the Management Team prepared.

2.4. Methodology & Approach

- **Participation** from all levels of the organization, staff, volunteers, members, management team, network and collaborating partners representatives in the process of strategic planning.
- The approach of **appreciative enquiry** for reality check of internal strengths and weakness towards better design of next strategic plan.
- Different **group discussions** were held for broadening the discussion on various issues both internal and external for building more clarity and better articulation.
- **Brainstorming** sessions were conducted in order to collect different perspectives so as to come up with most effective ideas to address the development issues in society.
- **In-depth Analysis** of the data and perspectives gathered to come up with the most appropriate strategic plan.

3. Review of last strategic plan:

An exercise of reviewing the last strategic plan was carried out in Sept 2015. The team members as well as some of the key stakeholders felt that the functioning of YRAI after 2014 mainly derived its directions from the earlier strategic plan and therefore its relevance, lessons and failures needs to be taken into consideration while framing the new strategic plan. The key points analysed are put in the matrix below:

Major areas	Appropriateness/positive aspects/ strengths/ best practices & Achievements - Analyses	Inappropriateness/ Gaps/ Challenges/ - weaknesses Analyses	Recommendations/ newness/ changes/ discard- Strategic
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YRAI has members from various backgrounds in the General Council and Governing Council, they have expertise to contribute to the growth of the organization and society in general. • Regular meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all are busy in their own work areas • No. of General Council Members too less. • Many members could not contribute much even though they wish, due to time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite more members of General Council. • . Since YRA will focus only on Vidarbha, more local members is ideal • . Impetus to the Governing Council to be more active

	<p>conducted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective board. • Good control over resources. • Consistent mirroring. 	<p>constraint.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not a directive board and so less contribution in human and financial resource mobilization. • Distance and travel costs for attending meetings is too high 	<p>& easily available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government retired officers, CSR representatives to be invited.
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good and clear policy documents in place. • No policy level operational issues for the management. • Every time no need to approach the Board for smaller issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staffs do not read policy documents. • Senior staff some time not conscious about the organizational policies. • Senior staff members don't easily cope with to new organization and external policy changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small amendments with regards to leave, travel allowance etc need to be done. • New staff should read all policies. • Senior staff should consciously orient and induct the new recruits. • Sr. staffs should consciously introduce/adopt policies in to daily practices/operations.
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate systems with regards to admin and accounts/ finance are in place and put to practice. That is the strength of the organization. • Program PME systems also are in place • Till now systems are not a hindrance in day to day functioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program systems are not properly practiced. • Monitoring has become loose. • Grass-root cadre's motivation has declined. • Following the systems could improve professional approach and efficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to streamline all Program PME systems. • MIS and record keeping should be more digitized using appropriate softwares.
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision is broader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's standpoints are changing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to revisit and make the vision
Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mission statement made in 2003 has performed well till now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching socio-political and economic frameworks are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to revisit the Mission statement

		changing fast. Mission statement has to be rearticulated to the merging realities.	
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the strategic plan the structure was very comprehensive and challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to financial and human resources the structure did not function well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple and with less complicated structure would help.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governance and the CEO as leaders are very strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much burden on particular leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural change and committed persons at appropriate positions warrants urgent attention.
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the preparation of the earlier strategic plan the organization had capable and committed staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the committed staff have left for various reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Team to be inducted with. Professional and passionate people.
Constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much broader canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many constituencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May need to more focused on select constituencies.
Thematic areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four larger thematic areas. Any intervention possible/ open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political scenario is changing. Governance as a theme seems no more important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to revise thematic areas in the next plan.
Geographical areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though geographical area was Vidarbha, it had different layers to cover all issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too broad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stick to Vidarbha for direct interventions? Be part of local, state, National network on thematic issues
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong value base. Always guiding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New staff to imbibe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflections and discussions/ debates to happen regularly
Programs, Projects and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum projects are under livelihood. Other themes have some interventions but not adequate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other themes have less scope. No funds. No staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could be focused on livelihood projects as broader theme under which housing, sanitation, education etc can be added. Social Inclusion, Good Governance,

			Natural Resource Management could become non-negotiable values of the organization so that focused interventions are possible
Funding partners/ pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New partners such as NABARD, BftW was possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding partners withdrew; mainly Oxfam and swissaid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR partners to tap. More work with NABARD, BftW to explore for long term relationship.
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign funding dried up. Indian funds challenging. CSR is much difficult to crack down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has become much tough to raise funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR, NABARD, and Government funds to tap. Business activities or promotion and expansion of Farmer Producer Company and financial inclusion etc should be tried.
Other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no assets of YRA and no liabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Till now functioning from rental place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some assets such as land. Building to be explored.
Other Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could establish linkages with other stakeholders like universities, Institutions, colleges, govt. offices, KVIC, CICR etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition among NGOs on same themes and interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan interventions so as to get more cooperation from other NGOs
Networks and Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with good number of networks and alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining those relationship becomes liability on few people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create cadres and give responsibilities.

After the review, a two days workshop was conducted on 20th and 21st Sept, 2015 that was facilitated by Mr. Mohan Surve. It was decided to present the first draft of the Strategic plan in next Governing Council in Jan 2016. On the basis of feedback revised draft will be presented in April/May 2016 meeting and mandated.

3.1 Major learning and Challenges from the review of last strategic plan

- ✓ It was felt and accepted that the **Governance-** of YRA is much more reflective, mirroring, corrective, strategic and playing policy level roles to run the organization smoothly and effectively. It is not much directive, intervening in day-to-day management but surely having sufficient control over resources and credibility and giving strategic directions to the interventions. YRA has members with different background but due to busy schedules it is difficult for them to utilise their expertise for YRA.
- ✓ Long distance and busy schedules do not allow all of them to participate in all meetings and special programs.
- ✓ No. of General Council members are less comparatively. This number could be increased.
- ✓ Considering internal reality and external challenges with regards to **human resources** new staff structure and roles and responsibilities should be developed and new professional staff should be brought in.
- ✓ **Livelihood** as Specific **thematic area** of intervention need to be identified and **Social Inclusion, Good Governance, Natural Resource Management** could become non-negotiable values of the organization so that focused interventions are possible.
- ✓ YRA should focus Vidarbha as **geographical/operational area** for direct intervention during next Strategic Plan.
- ✓ YRA should turn to **service mode, convergence** of Government development programs, **business model** through People's Institutions to address the dearth of funding support for program interventions.
- ✓ YRA should attract corporate/ **college volunteers** or **senior citizen** volunteers to address the shortage of human resources.
- ✓ **Simple, workable and affordable structure** to be proposed in the next strategic plan.
- ✓ YRA to focus on and around the themes of **Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change** as interventions.
- ✓ **Partnership with Corporate** needs to be cracked down.
- ✓ On the basis of past so many year's experience YRA should plan for **model/knowledge building, training institution, research** as intervention.
- ✓ Association with state, national **networks and alliance** could be continued for enhancement of the quality of YRA's interventions at grass-root level.
- ✓ YRA should create **own assets** such as training and research place, demonstration etc. during this strategic plan.
- ✓ Strategic plan for **change of leadership** is most critical aspect to be considered in the next plan.

- ✓ Irrespective of projects on different themes and different financial partners, there should be **minimum basic activities and processes** in selected clusters and villages as existence of YRA.

3.2 Review of thematic interventions

In the last Strategic Plan four thematic areas were proposed. In the review process special focus was given to review the achievements and gaps in each thematic intervention. Through consultations, workshop, group discussions and observations and data following are the main pointers, theme wise, summarised. The main reason behind the gaps could be articulated as project oriented mindset of the staff. It is a real challenge of strategizing to address this during next plan. However other pointers also may direct us to design the next strategic plan.

3.2.1. Livelihood Promotion towards Poverty Alleviation

This was one of the main thematic areas of promoting livelihood amongst the poor and backward strata of the society such as dalits, tribal, small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, women and minority groups. Land based, water based, forest based and other livelihood promotion was kept as focus.

- YRA could initiate projects, programs and interventions around agriculture, forest, and other livelihood but water based initiatives were not much though consciously tried.
- Since it was strategically decided that family as unit would be the focus of YRA, consciously projects like wadi development, individual forest rights, community forest rights, women's livelihood development, preparation of PDD for 15000 individual bio-gas units etc were planned and funds secured.
- Somehow it was big a challenge for the team to shift from mass campaigns like 'We can campaign' to family and district as unit.
- The Farmer's Producer Company could progress during this period and there is great potential for further growth for the benefits of the farming community, especially the share holders.
- The results on the economic development of individuals, families, villages was very clearly observed and experienced but proper recording and documentation remained weak.
- Convergence of Government schemes was adopted as major strategy in livelihood promotion but again proper documentation was lacking.

- Farmers Association that was formed as People's Organization to take up the right-based issues for advocacy remained neglected due to the strategy shift. It has become non-functional.
- Staffs with specific background like agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, forestry became necessary in implementation of such projects but were not available, constantly.
- Many skill training programs were planned but very limited trainings were implemented due to limited financial support.

3.2.2. Gender & Social Equity/ Inclusion

- Most of the interventions around gender equity formally closed down with the closure of funded projects. This happened due to the project oriented mentality of team.
- There were no extra efforts from the team leaders and the team members to continue with the theme as a core value in the absence of external funding support..
- New funding partners on these issues could not come ahead though YRAI submitted several proposals.
- The Mahila Vikas Parishad, a women's forum evolved across 5 districts in Vidarbha as people's organization slowed down due to lack of efforts by staff members and managerial neglect.
- However in other projects YRA is trying to promote gender equity consciously.
- May be in next strategic plan this could be developed as non- negotiable value in all YRA's interventions instead of keeping it as a separate thematic area of intervention.
- Efforts in the direction of capacity building of women as cadres and towards livelihood enhancement were made during the outgoing phase.

3.2.3. Natural Resource Management for Sustainable Development

- Under this theme promotion of sustainable agriculture, forest rights, soil and water conservation works, bio-diversity campaign, climate mitigation interventions continued.
- YRA joined Fair Climate Network and prepared PDD for 15000 biogas units and submitted to Gold Standard for verification and registration.
- YRA remained active as part of ASHA network.
- However in all these interventions and processes people's livelihood remained major agenda by default.
- New intervention of Diversion based Irrigation contributed a lot environmentally and conserving natural resources, but the farmer beneficiaries looked at it from livelihood perspective only.
- In the next Strategic Plan YRA can think of this as non-negotiable value instead of a separate theme.

- Forest conservation and bio-diversity work could be taken up in the next strategic plan.

3.2.4. Policy Advocacy & Campaigns towards Responsive Governance.

- YRA remained as an active stakeholder in the campaigns related to gender equity, domestic violence, bio-diversity, forest rights, sustainable agriculture, Millennium Development Goals, Responsive governance etc..
- Results of these campaigns are seen like ban on BT brinjal, no private university in Maharashtra etc, but it is difficult to identify direct beneficiaries and quantify.
- Politicization of issues like 50 % reservation for women, sexual harassment, MNREGA, JSY, women and climate justice etc was part of YRA's work under this theme.
- YRA lagged in special efforts to encourage the involvement of the disabled, PLHIV in the development process
- YRA is part of the national campaign on Governance Accountability towards MDG as Steering Committee Member.
- The campaign at State level in Maharashtra on Governance Accountability towards MDG is being led by YRA.
- Advocacy efforts on policies related to women, tribal, farmers, forest, agriculture etc have been done at local, state and national level.
- It was not possible for YRA to make concrete efforts on policy research per se, except one it did on impacts of sustainable agriculture with Monash University, Australia.
- Grass-root level strengthening of PRI- Gramsabha, Taluka Panchayat and Zilla Parishad through capacity building and collaborating with them on different front should be part of the next strategy of YRA.

4. External Context:

4.1. Financial Resources

- In India, the national political leadership has changed since 2014 and it has impacted the overall socio-economic scenario. The relationships with developed, developing and underdeveloped countries have been changed. Government of India is providing 'Development Aid' to adjoining poor countries. Many of the Indian offices of International NGOs providing foreign funding support to Indian NGOs to take up development programs are been asked to stop or withdraw their support considering that there is no need of such support to India. It is being claimed by our leaders that India does not need any outside financial support for its development but on the other hand FDI is being promoted on large scale. India has financial capacity to take care of development. It also may be true but if we look at the budget being allocated, every year, vis-a-vis the actual expenses it is continuously on a declining path..

- There are many issues in the areas of health, quality education, sanitation safe drinking water, nutritious food, housing, employment, agrarian crisis, climate change, social exclusion, gender discrimination, poverty, rights of people with disability and HIV, depletion of forests and natural resources. Unfortunately, the government is trying to cover up these issues or trying to keep these issues aside by bringing some other unwanted issues.
- Right based work that was the core of many of the NGOs in India has been suppressed by making changes/amendments in respective laws. Many NGOs are afraid of playing these roles and many INGOs funds are held up in the Ministry.
- Government funds for development programs are being channelized through particular segment only. Moreover funds are spent through Government promoted NGOs like MSRLM, CAIM etc.
- There is hope of CSR funds for the Indian NGOs but the corporates are not very clear about their CSR contribution and at the same time the government has plans to route these funds through government programs.
- Trusts/Foundations in India are very few and all of them now are strategically thinking of direct grass-root interventions on their own instead of supporting NGOs.
- Motivating individual donors, in Indian culture, for the development interventions is very difficult. In such a funding situation it has become very difficult for the organizations to run their activities effectively. Many of them have actually closed down. Many are facing problems and just hanging up, waiting for natural death.

4.2. Human Resources

- There is dearth of human resources having both capability and commitment together. Wherever such people are found, NGOs are not in a position to pay them as per their expectations.
- Young generation has increased their expectations too much as compared to their capabilities and attitudes towards productive work.
- Government promoted NGOs and CSR foundations have siphoned human resources in this sector recently.
- Those having professional attitude do not have passion and people having passion do not necessarily have the requisite skills.
- **Leadership qualities for handling development process as managers and leaders are not seen amongst new generation. No long-term commitments among capable ones.**

4.3. Community & Constituencies

- The stand points of community and individuals representing their constituencies have changed and they expect direct monetary gains from any interventions.
- Their voluntary participation in various programs, membership of People's Organizations and People's Institutions is reduced.
- Their approach of looking at the organization's activists has changed. They consider the NGO activists to the talathi, Gramsevak, Agriculture Assistant, providing services as per their convenience just because they get their salaries.
- People are not ready for any hard work including agriculture and /or labour work. Everybody is behind easy money.
- Corruption has become routine and a regular aspect in everybody's life.
- The parameters of poverty have been changed from economic to social, environmental poverty
- Collective and cooperative approach among poor is totally lost.

4.4. Development Issues

- Land and forests are still important aspects of Indian economy since almost 70% of the Indian population is dependent on the forest and agricultural land as main source of their livelihood. There is potential in land and forests to cater to this population for their livelihood but there is no proper mechanism developed with certain systems, science, technology, control, sustainable use, regeneration and adequate budget allocation etc.
- On the contrary exploitation of both land and forests is done on a large scale for the benefits of handful people.
- The government has failed to have policies, programs, budget and supporting implementing mechanism for optimising these resources on sustainable mode so as to improve livelihood of this depended population.
- Even if the schemes are announced and budget being allocated, the monitoring mechanism and people's participation is zero. Obviously it is difficult to fulfil the minimum livelihood needs of the dependent populations.
- Government is trying to divert dependency of population from land and forest to other means of livelihood. Skill development programs and 'skill India' is meant for that but yet there are not much youth skilled to take up new means of livelihood, especially in rural India.
- As compared to growth of the corporate and industrial sector human resources are not available/ equipped. Both skilled and unskilled labour is the biggest problem in

India currently. The flagship program of MNREGS is not being implemented in many parts of the country just because there are no labours demanding work.

- Almost 65% people in rural area are not equipped to go for any other livelihood options than agriculture and related work.
- In effect there is huge social gap of developed and underdeveloped, rural and urban and the quality of livelihood such as housing, sanitation, health, nutrition, water, education, energy, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources like soil erosion, water scarcity etc due to unsustainable use which has gone further down as compared to the past decade.
- This is further aggravating the inequity on the basis of gender, caste, creed, religion leading towards violation of basic human rights.
- The under developed are exploited by the rich, established, traders, corporate, politicians, bureaucrats, police, judiciary and cultural leaders.
- Allocated budget on these areas every year is not fully utilised. Rather the development schemes are not reaching/ effectively implemented so as to make effective changes in their lives.
- United Nations has mandated Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and most of the member states have mandated the same.
- Gramsabha is a powerful political tool but it is hardly used by the villagers for their development.
- SHGs, Producer Groups, Cooperatives, producer company, forest rights committee, Bio-diversity Committee etc are most powerful mechanism to collectively harness the development but people are not educated/ facilitated in that direction.
- Clearly two streams in society like developed and under developed are being gradually evolved that will be totally unsustainable.
- The quality of all government services like education, health, nutrition, MCH, water supply, roads, rural infrastructure, and sanitation have deteriorated to an unimaginable low. .
- Vidarbha region of Maharashtra state is considered as a less developed region due to various reasons. Political leadership, unorganised people, non participation, non cooperative attitude, industrial backwardness, lack of infrastructural facilities like irrigation for agriculture, roads and social and economic disparity are some of the reasons of its backwardness.

5. Internal reality:

The changes in the external environment have impacted internal reality of YRA as an organization. The gaps found during reviews are the effects of both internal and external realities. In the process of strategic planning members brought those internal realities in a form of key points as strengths and weaknesses as mentioned below.

5.1 Strengths

- YRA has very active board- reflective, mirroring, and strategic and policy framing. Good control over resources.
- YRA has a highly committed, very strong, creative, visionary and demonstrative leadership, having wider development perspective.
- Collective and democratic leadership style and culture is the real strength.
- Risk taking and taking new challenges has remained basic elements, that helped YRA to sustain during the turmoil.
- Openness, vibrant decision making, responding to the situation in a proactive manner and value framework of the organization is quite strong.
- Internal planning, monitoring and evaluation systems are in place.
- Staff appraisal, work performance, work management, line management, formal & informal training to enhance the capacities of staff are regular processes.
- YRA's approach of critical partnership with other stakeholders has contributed to overall success.
- Five core values adopted across the organization is the greatest strength.
- Farmer produce organization is the strength for taking up business activities.
- YRA entered in to Climate Change as a new issue.

5.2 Weaknesses

- Need to develop more skills in research, analytical skill, documentation, knowledge building and model building.
- Public relationship, follow-up with stakeholders on regular basis, publicity of good work and good practices need to be improved.
- YRA is losing the strength of engaging with likeminded stakeholders in issue based alliances.
- YRA's project oriented approach has de-focused the strength of volunteers and people's Organization.

- YRA's hold on local institutions and organization mechanism like Gramsabha, grampanchayat, SHG etc is getting weakened.
- Use of media and social media is one of the weaknesses of YRA.
- Thematic leaders, teams and structure that existed have come to an end.
- More in-depth study/ understanding on Forest, agriculture and Water related issues to be done.
- Appointment of technical staff such as agriculturists, marketing, business development, engineers etc should be focused.
- District/ cluster level set-up, Leadership, systems & staff development remained very weak.
- Second line leadership/ new youngsters need to be enrolled in.
- Staff development from the third level and grass-root has to be matching with hiring new staff at higher level.

6. Core Purpose:

"To facilitate empowerment of the underdeveloped, distressed communities and provide them services towards their overall development."

In the external context described in section 4 above, YRA has a significant role to empower the identified constituencies, viz; dalits, tribals, small, marginal and landless farmers, BPL families, women, vulnerable children, so that they are capable to harness the fruits of development. It is envisioned that the gap between deprived communities and developed strata of the society is reduced. The intention of the interventions is to improve the quality of life of the selected constituencies and they get quality education, health services, food security and right to work as their basic human rights. Social discriminations on the basis of caste, caste, creed, economy, religion, age, sex, language etc is the source of exploitation of underprivileged by the privileged people. The purpose of strategic interventions should be focused on bringing parity, equality and reduce the factors of social discrimination through capacity building, service provisioning, economic benefits sharing and convergence approach. Good and responsive governance, natural resource sustainability and social equity will be non-negotiable, underlined in all interventions as a strategy. YRA envisages encompassing these core values in the strategic plan for next four years. (2016-20)

7. The Plan:

7.1 Vision:

"An empowered and capable society with all human rights; equity, peace, justice and security; without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, ethnicity, religion, gender, age and language; leading towards sustainability".

7.2 Mission:

"YRA is committed to facilitate social transformation through socio-economic, empowerment of The Rural Poor by establishing their access over rights & resources that will promote social equity, ecological balance and enable them to participate in good and responsive governance through their Organizations and Institutions".

7.3 Thematic Intervention:

Better Livelihood towards sustainability

It has been historically proved that in human society economic changes influence political, social and then lastly cultural changes. In other words, for socio-political and cultural changes economic changes are important. Since India accepted neo liberal economic policies, the impacts in economic terms as also political and social have changed drastically. Everybody including dry land farmers is behind earning more. They are not in a position to understand that in the race of 'earning more' they are losing their lives. The labourers waiting hours together for wage employment demand exaggerated amounts for their labour and anything less than they quote, as they say, "is not affordable". At the end of the day they remain earning nothing. For 'earning more' there is no business done on fair terms. For more earning natural resources like soil, water, forests are exploited without thinking of sustainability.

Livelihood is understood by YRA as a broader term. It includes better housing, sanitation, safe drinking water, adequate nutritious food, quality education, better health and so on. This cannot happen on its own. Many factors and actors are influencing either way- positive or negative. Balancing all the factors and actors in the process of better livelihoods thereby increasing family income as a unit of larger society requires a broader understanding and supporting environment which is the biggest challenge for YRA and that will perhaps lead towards sustainability. Better livelihood without considering social harmony, equity, just use of resources, ecological balance cannot move towards sustainability. For better livelihood surely family income has to be increased but that cannot be at the cost of others. Unfortunately certain works are given dignity because of monetary gains while other works that contribute more to the society and the planet are given less important or considered worthless. For example, today a farming family is not socially honoured but when in India agriculture was having main contribution in GDP, farmer was the most honoured. So money matters. For better livelihood money is important today.

Ensuring better livelihood of people is the equal responsibility of the Government. But on this front people in general, especially the poor, have left hopes. They don't believe that

government will improve their livelihood. At the same time flagship programs and policies are made by the government for their development. Budget allocation for education, sanitation, health, food, housing, water supply etc is made by the government year after year. Still the situation with regards to the livelihood of poor has not changed drastically. While GDP of India as a nation is on the rise with India providing development aids to small and poor countries, almost 60% people of its own people live in poverty both in urban and rural areas. Maximum percentage of poor people is in rural and tribal areas. Poverty of education, information, courage, approaching government, asking for just rights etc could be the gap at one level and government officers/ functionaries not approaching right people for implementation of these programs could be the other dimension of the problem.. YRA can play a vital role of 'convergence' that will bring together the needy people with the government development programs and accelerate the livelihood improvement process among rural and tribal poor.

The potentials in agriculture, forest and water bodies, minerals can offer alternative livelihood source if explored with policy back up and government supported programs. Additional support in skill trainings, technology transfer, credit facility, management inputs, leadership capacities and attitudinal change could make drastic positive changes in the lives of the poor communities.

With this perspective YRA proposes to focus on better livelihoods towards sustainability as a major theme of intervention for the next four years of its strategy.

Processes of awareness generation, attitudinal change, capacity building, skill development, organization building, institutional building, demonstrations, policy research and advocacy, credit linking, convergence of government programs and schemes and new innovative alternative avenues will be planned and implemented along with existing stakeholders and institutions. Programs and projects on those lines will be developed. New funding partners, especially CSR will be explored along with existing funding partners.

Cross cutting themes

Since the beginning of the outgoing strategic plan, YRA had included thematic interventions in the areas of 'Gender and social equity', 'NRM and Sustainable development' and 'Responsive governance'. All these areas are equally important but YRA wishes to focus on these areas not as separate thematic areas but as crosscutting themes.

Discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, creed, religion, ethnicity, economic strata, education, language, geography are the critical issues in our society. Exploitation in all spheres, less space for open competition, low education opportunities, low employment

opportunities due to social discriminations are the main hurdles in the development of such communities. They are in majority amongst the Poor. Social acceptance of these discriminations backed with incapability of this section promotes more vulnerability among them that affects the quality of their life. They are unable to contribute to the overall development and thus the vicious circle forces them towards unsustainable acts—socially, culturally, environmentally and even political actions. A Break-through in this circle has to be introduced to make the change that will benefit not only this sector but overall human society. Hence gender and social discrimination will be underlined and non-negotiable theme of intervention while focusing on the main thematic area.

Natural resources such as land, forest, water, mineral, sun, wind, air are the real estate and life giving sources for all human and other creatures in this universe. Exploitation of these resources for livelihood and greed of few people without any control is worsening the environment. 'Climate change' is the major challenge in front of the planet. Sustainable and just use and protection, development, conservation of all natural resources is most critical for everybody. Since the population identified by YRA as its constituency is closest to all these natural resources, their role in conservation and regeneration, protection and development is most important. Hence in the process of better livelihood natural resource management will be another non-negotiable and underlining theme of YRA as a cross cutting strategy.

The government has made certain policies for development including promoting equity and controlling discrimination as also conservation and protection of all natural resources. To support those policies government also have many programs and budget provisions. There are ministries and departments to implement these policies and programs. But efficiency and effectiveness is questionable. Good and responsive governance system is the only answer for that. Therefore this theme is important but again YRA considers this as cross cutting and non-negotiable to bring in transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the governance while planning and implementing all intervention around the main theme.

7.4 Programmatic Interventions proposed

Major theme of Program interventions for this strategic plan period (2016-20) is **Better Livelihood towards Sustainability** The broad program areas are:

Key intervention areas	Who will benefit	What will be results	How will the initiative sustain	Crosscutting themes
Sustainable Agriculture, Irrigation	Small, marginal and medium farmers	Increased income, less chemical inputs, improved soil	Farmer's Producer groups. Market links. Local	Focus on women farmers, dalit and tribal farmers, local and climate

		fertility, increase in production. LCF credit	Service Provider's cadre. Continued carbon credit	resilient varieties, advocacy on policy issues like GM food
Soil & water conservation	All farming communities and others	Fertile soil and adequate water availability. Improved crop and fodder productivity	Water user groups, Grampanchayat subcommittee, Village development plans	Women representation, beneficiaries from all strata of society
Forest Conservation	All forest dwellers directly and the whole world indirectly. Wild animals and food chain	Environmental sustainability, increase of local variety, Increased Incomes for forest dwellers. Carbon credit	Forest Rights Committee/ JFMC/ BMC/ Gramsabha	Social equity promotion, Policy level intervention, management & capacity building of local bodies
Bio-diversity management	As above	All above plus patents	BMC, PBR, Gramsabha	Social equity promoted and maintained
NTFP based income generating activities	All as above	Improved family Income, ownership over forest resources	CFRC, Gramsabha, monetary gains will force for sustainability	Social equity, Gender, good governance at village level
Small ruminants based IGA	Small, marginal and landless farming community	Improved family income, food availability in the market	Producer Groups, Producer company	Social & gender equity
Health and MCH initiatives	Children and women from poor communities	Better health and govt. Health services, healthy children and women	Village Health Committee,	Gender equality
Quality Education	Children from poor communities	Better education quality, better citizens	School Management Committee	Social & gender equality, good governance
Sanitation & Safe drinking water	All poor community people	Reduced health problems due to reduced open defecation & safe drinking water	Education & practices plus local level mechanisms	Gender equality
Non-farm micro enterprises	Youth and women skill training	Increased skills & Income	Skill Training Institutions and increasing micro enterprises	Social and gender equality
Financial Inclusion	The poor communities	Credit availability, improved livelihood	People's Institutions such as SHG, Cooperatives, FPCs	Gender and social equality

7.5. Operational Strategic Orientation

- Evolving local collective mechanism in form of People's Organizations and People's Institutions (**PO/PI**) and building their capacity to play effective roles for sustaining the development initiatives.
- **Convergence** of all government development programs to achieve the results, develop relationship with government mechanism at all levels.
- **Collaborating** with all stakeholders such as bankers, industries, universities and colleges/ schools, experts, media, scientists, research organizations.
- Irrespective of funded project activities **minimum organizational processes** in each village as existence of the organization such as SHG, Producer Groups, Mahila Vikas Parishad, Youth group, Trained volunteers/ local service providers cadre, Village Development Plan, Home visits, Strengthening Gramsabha by YRA representative
- Shift from supporting/ **giver role to facilitator** and service provider role, business model, market linkages.
- Invite **volunteers** from colleges, corporate houses, retired government officers with diverse background in properly arranged mode.
- Work in alignment with UN agenda of **SDGs and Climate change**
- Association with various **network and alliances** will be strengthened
- YRA will try to develop **own assets** during this Strategic Plan
- Mass Awareness, Information dissemination, mobilization, publication, use of **social media**
- Promotion of Best practices, **documentation, research** projects
- Direct **demonstrations, service provisioning, convergence, counselling** will be strategic approaches in all interventions.
- Involve and strengthen **Panchayati Raj Institutions** in micro planning and monitoring at the local level for effective implementation of the programme and ensuring effective community participation.

7.6. Geographical area

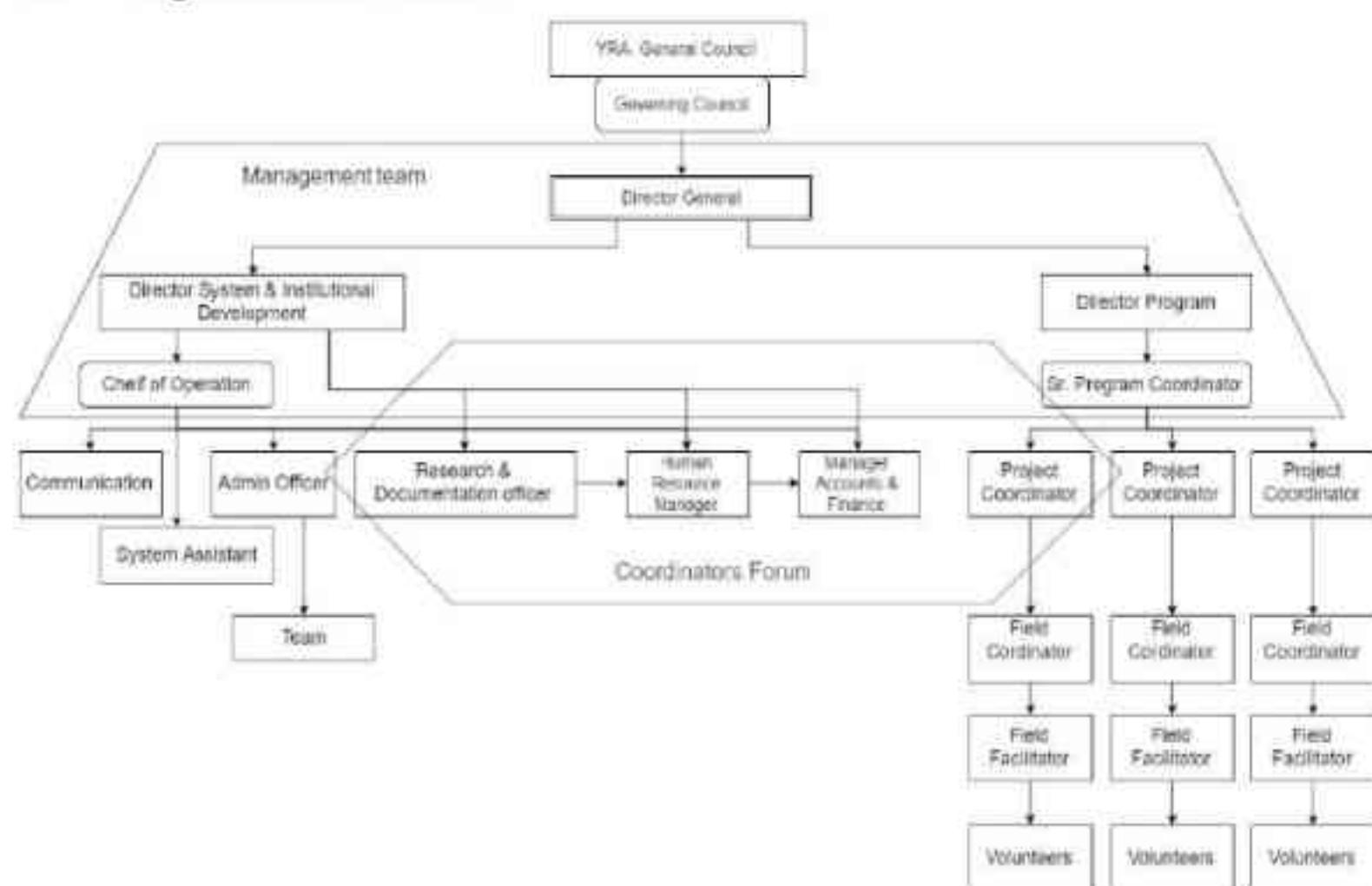
YRA is registered under M. P. Society Registration Act 1973 from Bhopal considering that the organization will be working at Western Regional level covering the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In the beginning interventions were started in all the three states but due to lack of committed and capable local leadership YRA had to withdraw from MP and Gujarat.

For current strategic plan broader geographical area would be western region but specific interventions will be on arid and semi arid agriculture zone/s. This mainly covers Vidarbha and Marathwada in Maharashtra and adjoining districts of Madhya Pradesh. Current focus of interventions in eight districts in Vidarbha will be strengthened as first strategy and on the basis of need, urgency and opportunity YRA may spread in to other geographical areas.

7.7. Constituency

Youth, Children and women along with Dalits, Tribals, Small and marginal farmers, landless & BPL families will be the direct constituency.

7.8. Organizational structure



The General Council will be the highest authority supported by the Governing Council elected every two years. The Governing Council will meet every quarter in normal conditions. Director General will be supporting the Governing Council in day to day functioning of the organization at one level and providing overall direction to the entire organization under the guidance of Governing Council on the other. The Director Program will be responsible for developing all new programs and also provide direction to all existing programs, projects and processes. S/he will be the program in charge, reporting to the Director General. The Director System & Institutional Development will be responsible for all functioning of the organization such as Governance, Human Resources, Financial management, legal and statutory management, over all institution Management of assets.

developing assets and control etc. reporting to the Director General. Sr. Program Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating all running project- planning, implementation and monitoring, reporting, MIS, training of staff and effective and efficient implementation reporting to Director Program. S/he will assist DPs in developing new programs on continuing basis. Under Sr. Program Coordinator there will be Project Coordinators for each Project, depending up on the size of the project and project staff as per project specifications. Under Director System and Institutional Development there will be Chief of Operation who will be looking after external communication, institutional systems, policies, management of assets, branding and accounts and admin systems etc. There will be positions of Accounts and finance Manager and Team of staff, Human Resource & Personnel, Administrative Officer and team, Research & Documentation under the Director System & Institution Development.

7.9. Governance

There will be a separate Governance Manual for the functional guidance for the Governing Council and the General Council. Currently there are 12 General Council Members which seems to be small in number. Couple of them may get retired very soon. Some of them are too busy to even attend regular meetings. In this light it is proposed that during this strategic plan period the number of General Council should be increased up to 25. In the election of Governing Council, 2016 local and active members should be given preference in the Governing Council.

7.10. Policies

YRA has developed various organisational policies and has put them in to practice. However, additional policies such as whistle blowing policy will be prepared and mandated by the Governing/ General Council. In light of the new strategic plan, immediately after its mandating by the council, all policies will be reviewed and necessary changes/ amendments will be done quickly. All the staff and members of General/ Governing Council will be oriented on those policies and changes.

7.11. Systems

YRA has developed adequate systems related to administration, accounts, finance, programs planning monitoring and implementation, personnel etc. In the context of new strategic plan review of all systems need to be done in 2016. All will be oriented accordingly.

7.12. Leadership

Current leadership on behalf of Governing Council and General Council is capable and committed. But evolving second line leadership is very critical for YRA. Serious efforts need to be done both at Governing Council and Senior staff level of the organization for visioning about second leadership.

7.13. Human Resources

Currently YRA has very few capable and committed staff. Motivation, spirit, positive environment building at grass-root level staff, rebuilding the volunteer's forum and appointment of new young professionals in the area of agriculture, forest, water, energy, climate change, IT, research is the need of the organization. YRA will have to plan the budget and human resources as an Institution so as to build common minimum programs and other funded projects.

7.14. Financial Resources

The strategic plan will be shared with existing funding partners after adoption by the General Council and negotiation with them on the areas of their choices will be done for further partnership and project preparation. New potential funding partners both, foreign and Indian, will be identified and the strategic plan will be shared with them. The sources of foreign funding have been reduced drastically. Conscious efforts will be made to raise funds from Indian funding partners, Corporate under the Corporate Social Responsibility, Indian Trusts and Government funds though it is tough. Community contribution, sale of publications, consulting assignments, crowd funding etc will be tried during this strategic plan period. Annual budget will be prepared and resource mobilization strategies also will be worked out every year.

12. Conclusion:

The strategic plan will be implemented from Sept 2016 and reviewed in Annual General Council Meeting every year. Human resources are very important aspects for implementing the plan as also to raise funds and develop projects including their qualitative implementation. During this plan serious efforts will be made to appoint the required positions as per the structure. Central Cost allocation policy will be developed and practiced in this period. Annual Operational Plan with annual budget will be prepared by the senior staff. The first operational plan for the period of Sept 2016 to March 2017 will be prepared immediately after the mandating of the Plan by the General Council in its meeting on 25th Aug 2016 and circulated to Governing Council for their comments/ acceptance.



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