

## **APMAS - Sixteenth Anniversary Celebrations!**

Warm Personal Greetings and Congratulations to all the members of the APMAS and Sadhikaratha Foundation Family on our 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations!

I feel extremely privileged and pleased to share with you all about the incredible journey of APMAS (now MAS!) over the past sixteen years. Our first step in the journey was supporting women SHG movement in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in 2001 and journeyed across several states in the country. The credibility gained in terms of building social capital through strengthening both rural and urban SHGs provided an impetus to work towards empowering the communities through promotion of livelihoods, natural resources management, integrated farming systems, farmer producer organizations, and model villages besides reaching out to a few developing countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam). Currently we have field presence in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar and also in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra through SHPIs (self-help promoting institutions).

The strong foundation for this eventful journey of 16 years was laid down by **six founding members of APMAS** (Dr. Pamidi Kotaiah, Mr. Vijay Mahajan, Dr. Nandita Ray, Mr. S.P. Tucker, Mr. K. Raju, and myself) who played a pivotal role in articulating a clear vision, mission and strategy for the organization. The funding support from DFID India through Care India for a period of initial six years gave the necessary stability and strength for APMAS to grow and innovate. In due course, the support from several State Governments, particularly Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, NABARD, national and international donors such as Aga Khan Foundation, Ford Foundation, World Bank, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, DGRV Germany, Michael and Sustan Dell Foundation, Bread for the World, GIZ, AEIN, BMGF and CSR Foundations such as Hoermann KG, Aurobindo Pharma Ltd, Pravesha Industries Ltd etc was obtained to work on various development issues inline with our vision and mission. Building on a solid foundation laid by Dr. Kotaiah and Mr. Vijay Mahajan and with the guidance and support of **Mr. Kaki Madhava Rao, the present Chair, Ms. Mahpara Ali, the Vice Chair and the other members of the Board of APMAS**, our governance has become much stronger with policies and strong internal control systems. Currently we receive funding from several national & international donors and State Governments, and the compliances are met to their satisfaction.

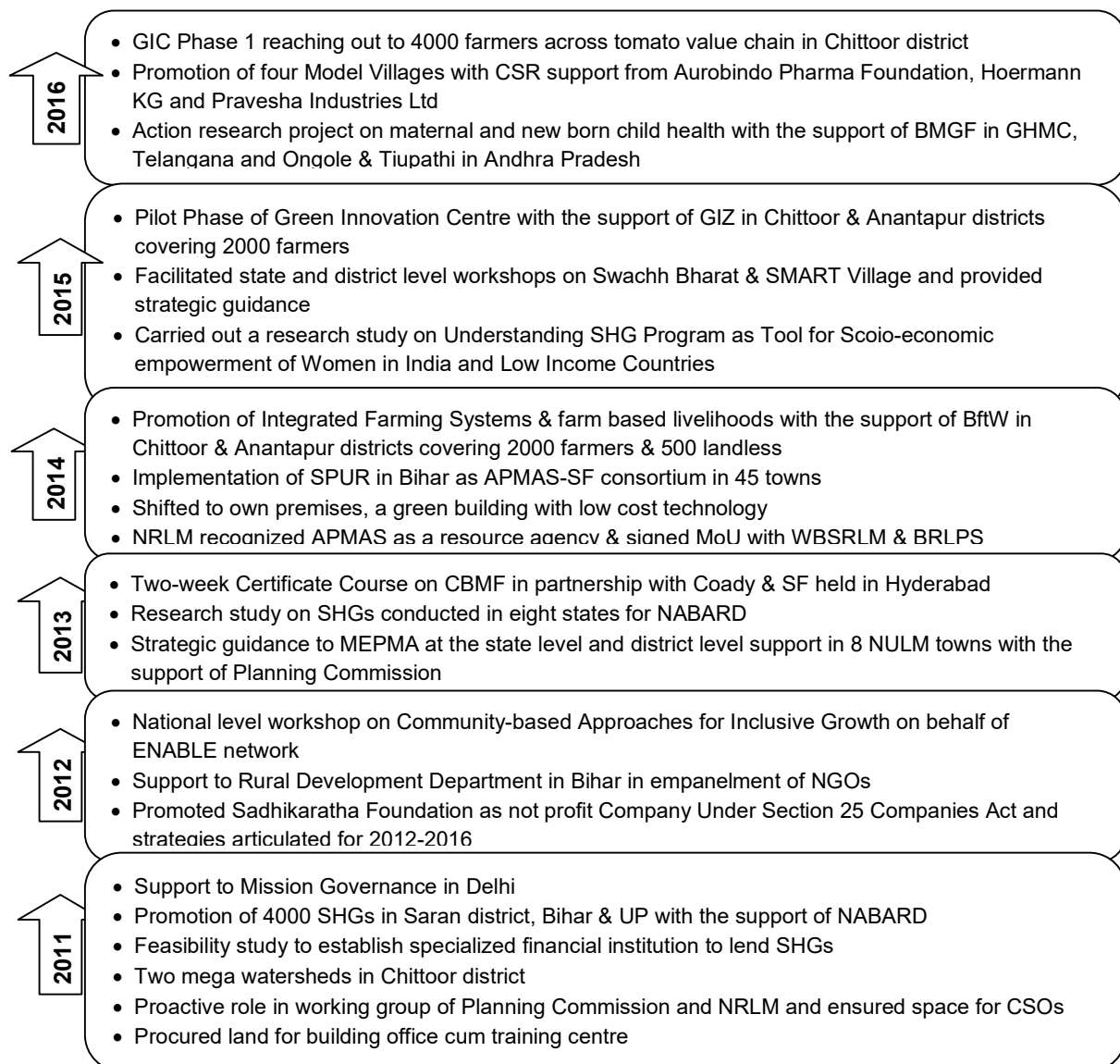
As a technical resource agency, APMAS has made significant contribution to the social mobilization and institution building processes of SHGs and their Federations both in rural & urban areas, evolving its role with ever-changing policies of Government of India. Our work especially with the SHGs has been recognized by Wockhardt Foundation with the **Eradication of Poverty Popular Awards in the Self Help Group Category** in Sept 2016. The research and advocacy has been one of our mainstays in our journey and about 68 research studies were undertaken, which formed the basis for policy advocacy and working with the State & Central Governments, and NABARD in making course corrections in India's SHG movement.

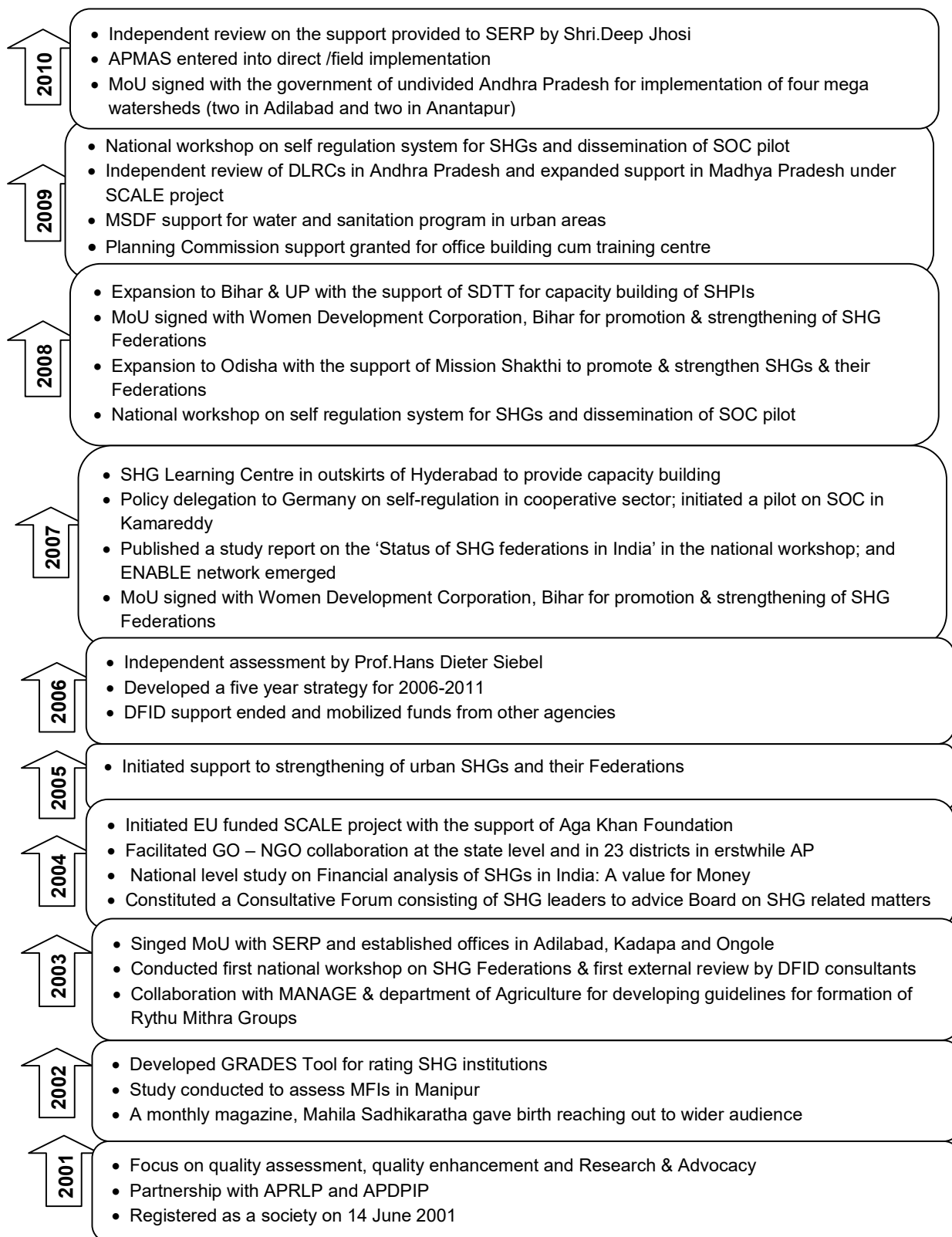
In sixteen years of our journey, we have established our credibility not only in strengthening SHG movement but also in the **livelihoods sector**. The base for our livelihoods work began with the support of Aga Khan Foundation for European Union funded SCALE project during

2004-2012. This was further strengthened by the implementation of six mega watersheds in the states of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana. The foundation laid and experience gained through watershed programme prompted us to work with farmers especially small holders. Currently we are intensively engaged in promoting integrated farming systems and farmer producer organizations (FPOs) to engage in innovative agriculture value-chain interventions in Kamareddy district in Telangana and Ananthapur & Chittoor districts in Andhra Pradesh.

Another prime area of work focus is promotion of **model villages** with the support of CSR funding. Currently we are working in four villages (two in Telangana and two in Andhra Pradesh) in close collaboration with the government flagship programmes such as SMART Village and Grama Jyothi. We will be having considerable experience and learning in this domain very soon to share with the various stakeholders and will be able to define what is model village and strategies to achieve it.

### 16 years of Journey - Key Milestones achieved: 2001 to 2016





## **Recognition and Awards**

- The Planning Commission, Government of India invited the CEO as a member of the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan Steering Committee on Rural Livelihoods & Rural Governance in 2012. The Planning Commission also appointed the CEO as the Chairperson of the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan Working Group on National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), a flagship program of GoI, in 2012.
- APMAS has been a member of the State Level Government NGO Coordination Committee established by Government of Andhra Pradesh in 2007
- APMAS is a member of the Managing Committee of the State Level Apex Cooperative Federation of the SHGs; member of the Executive Committee of the Smart Andhra Pradesh Foundation and member of the Executive Committee of NULM;
- APMAS recognized as a national level capacity building organization by NRLM & NULM.
- TISS empanelled APMAS based on a rigorous assessment
- Wockhart Foundation awarded Eradication of Poverty Popular Awards in the Self Help Group category.
- Received the best NGO award twice for implementing the Integrated Watershed Management Programme at the state level and in Anantapur district
- APMAS supported Hindupuram Town Level Federation (TLF) in Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh was adjudged the Best TLF in the district and received award
- The qualitative and committed services provided by APMAS in Ongole town, Prakasam district, received the acclamation of the district administration and received the Best Services award
- Received the Best NGO in the Ichoda mandal, Adilabad district of Telangana state
- APMAS supported Ismailpur Swayam Sahayata Samuh (SSS) in Kaler Block, Arwal district of Bihar state was adjudged and awarded as the Best SSS

## **Challenges and the Journey Ahead**

Over sixteen years, APMAS has made a successful, yet a very challenging journey, in realizing its vision for the empowerment of marginalized women and deprived communities and thereby contributing to poverty reduction initiatives. Though APMAS was born with a silver spoon, the journey wasn't smooth all through. The path we journeyed was with a number of challenges – such as delayed fund releases from the government, the target approach adopted in government programmes such as IWMP, lack of affirmative action from the government as per the policy framework; political interference in the field, restricted autonomy to the SHG institutions, a legal battle with an organization who was not able to fulfill the commitments, limited capacities of field level NGOs, etc.

In spite of the constraints and challenges, we were able to sail with our crew due to the exemplary guidance received from the Board and to remain relevant in the context of changing development scenario. We have also received unconditional support from senior Government Officials like Mr. SP Tucker, Mr. K. Raju, Mr. Vijay Kumar, Mr. Santosh Mathew, Mr. Jayesh Ranjan, Mr. Rajasekhar and Mrs. Vijayalakshmi which enabled us in dealing with some of the major challenges faced by us.

Besides, today in a country as a whole, the third sector which plays an important role in inclusive development and growth of the nation is faced with multiple challenges. The scale of restrictions seems to be very high due to which the space for the civil society is shrinking day by day. The challenges, difficulties and constraints are in the form of emerging new legislations (now GST) and regulatory regimes or arbitrary implementation of existing laws such as FCRA, Income Tax and Service Tax. A major challenge is also the declining financial resources to the sector. The state is also titling towards the corporate / private and the affirmative action to address poverty and inequalities are not happening in a consistent and relevant manner. In spite of 70 years of independence, still the country struggles to tackle the very basic needs of the poor and the marginalized. Our commitments in the form of national and international goals and more so the sustainable development goals (SDGs) need to be achieved as promised and for this strong presence and action from the civil society is essential and non-negotiable.

APMAS has been playing a strategic role in working with the government contributing to the poverty reduction initiatives. We are undoubtedly committed and passionate in playing a strategic role for years to come and making our paths democratic, participatory and justice leading to the empowerment of underprivileged communities and ensuring inclusive development and growth. Such a journey is definitely possible with the guidance from our learned and eminent Board members, support from our efficient staff and cooperation from our development partners and most importantly our communities.

Keeping in view of the above, the core team has brainstormed the following as the immediate priorities.

- ✚ Create models and innovations in promotion and strengthening of farmer producer organisations for undertaking value chain interventions
- ✚ Climate resilient agriculture and other initiatives to mitigate climate change
- ✚ Building social capital in SHG and livelihoods sector
- ✚ Utilisation of our training centre to the fullest capacity by organizing training and immersion programs for the staff engaged in the implementation of NRLM & NULM.
- ✚ Research studies both at national & international level
- ✚ DGRV & APMAS strategic partnership: Capacity building & advisory support to various organizations in Africa and Asia
- ✚ Strategic partnership with MANAGE, NIRD, IPE, IRMA, NABARD in the areas of capacity building, research studies, students internship etc
- ✚ Focus on Sadhikaratha Foundation becoming a reputable not-for-profit company providing high quality services to various stakeholders in the development sector
- ✚ Dissemination of learning from our work in model villages to stakeholders and defining the transformation in terms of human development besides infrastructure development
- ✚ Demonstrate models in the form of “model villages” though a community-driven holistic development strategy building on our experience CSR funding.
- ✚ Become a nodal agency and support grassroots NGOs in strengthening their governance and systems so as to ensure a strong space for civil society
- ✚ Use of information technology to track the progress /impact and for course corrections

🚩 Revisit the vision, mission and thrust areas to develop strategic plan for next five years

With a committed and dedicated professional staff, particularly with the recruitment of new staff from the professional institutions, strong partnerships with diverse stakeholders including the Central & State Governments, academic & training institutions, clear policy direction from the Board and strong institutional systems and processes, we aim to achieve new heights in the years to come. We have to be driven by passion, a shared vision built on our shared values & ethics and innovative strategies to maximize the impact. We have to evolve our niche and remain focused to realize our vision and mission.

Would like to appreciate the efforts of all the staff who are a part of the larger APMAS family and their family members for your commitment, contribution and hard work. Look forward to your renewed commitment and increased innovation as we build self-reliant people's organizations, particularly FPOs that are able to engage with private sector and markets to increase their incomes and improve their quality of life.

With warm personal regards,

CS Reddy  
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