Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS)

Organisational Strategy 2026

**Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh
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APMAS STRATEGIC PLAN - 2026

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STRATEGIC PLAN - 2026

BACKGROUND

Established in 2001 to strengthen the women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and SHG federations in the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh, Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (formerly APMAS) has grown in scope, scale and strength, established its credibility as a national level Resource Organisation engaged in diverse partnerships with strong presence in field implementation and as capacity building institution. After initial years of work in the SHG movement, APMAS embarked on the journey into livelihoods enhancement and Natural Resource Management (NRM). For the past five years, APMAS has been intensively engaged in promotion and strengthening of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and value chain activities.

For over 17 years, while there have been many significant achievements in terms of playing a pivotal role in building the capacities of the SHG promoters and advocacy for appropriate systems and processes for the SHG movement to evolve into an autonomous and self-reliant system, there were challenges particularly in successfully implementing projects in partnership with Governments. Though APMAS began as a capacity building organisation with emphasis on quality standards in SHGs & SHG federations, it decided to engage in piloting innovations like self-regulatory systems for the SHG movement and in having decentralised capacity building centres for natural resource management. Direct implementation of SHG promotion and watershed projects was taken up to gain in-depth understanding, served us well in capacity building and evidence-based policy advocacy. On the other hand, there have been drastic changes in the external environment and opportunities – dwindling space to offer services for self-help institutions; state becoming more monopolistic and decline in international funding availability. More recently, FPOs and agriculture value chains emerging as major thrust areas.

In this context, the Board and the Management of the organization felt it appropriate to revisit the organizational vision, mission and strategies. In this background, retreats were held with Board and staff wherein the vision, mission, organizational needs & strengths and the external environment were discussed to develop *'Organisational Strategy 2026'*. This document is developed based on the outcomes of the retreats and subsequent discussions held with the staff & the Board, and the experience & lessons learnt from the field, research & advocacy and working with various stakeholders.

ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT – A Reality Check!

In the above background of experience of the organization and lessons, it can be noted that there are key developments and challenges in the broader ecosystem, which have a bearing on the organizational vision, mission and strategies.

Demographic
- Youth emerging as high priority segment moving away from farming & rural life to insecure & unorganized sectors in urban areas without gainful employment
- Women becoming more burdened with occupational diversification of men, feminization of agriculture & migration without having control over assets & decision making

Political
- State titling towards industrialization, withering away from welfare measures thus resulting in deficient affirmative action in addressing poverty and inequalities
- Lack of political will to keep up the promise and political capture of People's Institutions
- Shrinking space for civil society organizations & democratic governance, stringent legal measures, state taking control over people's institutions for its political gain, lack of measures to control corruption at various levels, etc

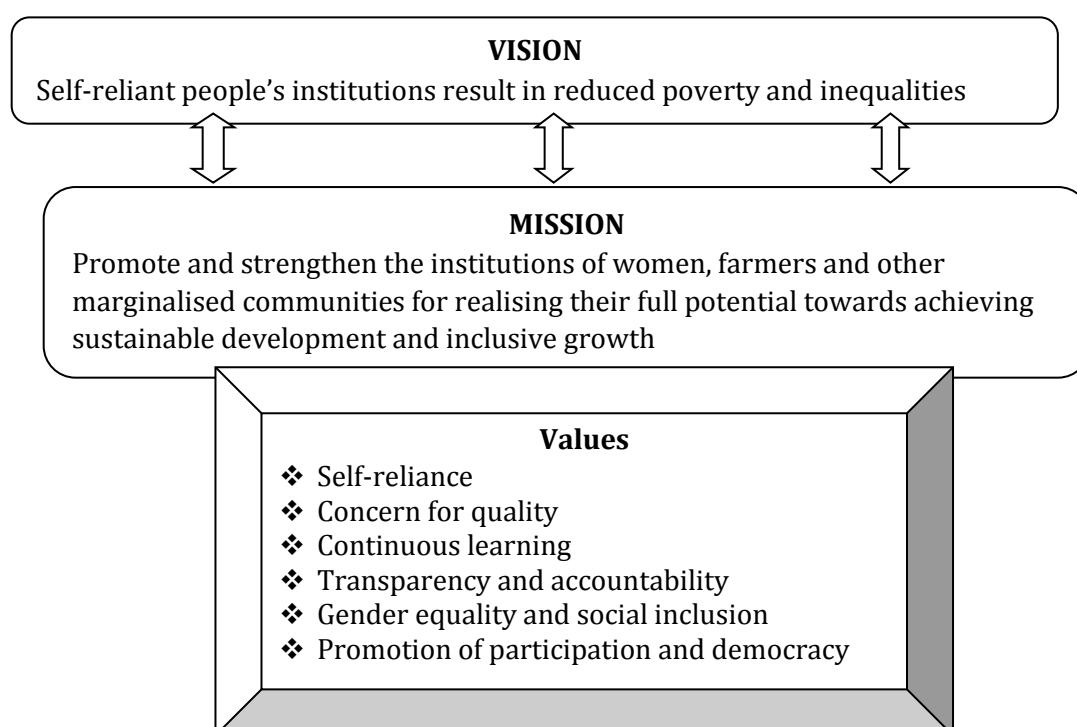|	
Socio-Economic	• Development models inviting huge private/foreign investment, public private partnerships focusing on infrastructure, communication, irrigation, power, food processing, agri-business, value addition, skill development, role of market etc. • Increasing urbanization and demonstration effect resulting in rural-folk opting out of agriculture & allied occupations, huge distress in farming, options to learn various skills, growing middle class and its increasing aspirations
Ecological	Increasingly felt climate change variations/disasters, degradation of natural resources, production and consumption patterns resulting in depletion of scarce resources, compulsion /felt need to adopt climate resilient practices and measures in production and consumption domains, etc
Funding	India is no more a priority for Donor AID; the bilateral and multilateral AID controlled by the State; increasing opportunities for NGOs for consultancy works & technical services within and outside the nation, corporate funding; promotion of business /social enterprises, opportunities to work with market players etc

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

While there are quite a few challenges in the ecosystem to be tackled, following are the emerging opportunities for the organisation

- Sustainable practices as an emerging thrust area
- Social impact funding /coporate funding
- Emerging domains such as FPOs & value chain interventions, urban poverty reduction – water & sanitation (solid waste management), skill building& placement, promotion of social enterprises, cilimate resilient practices and adoptations, natural farming,
- Opportunities for partnerships across mulitple stakeholders /development players and Public, Private, Community Partnerships (PPCP) and South-South Cooperation

STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK – 2026

VISION
Self-reliant people's institutions result in reduced poverty and inequalities

MISSION
Promote and strengthen the institutions of women, farmers and other marginalised communities for realising their full potential towards achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth

Values
❖ Self-reliance
❖ Concern for quality
❖ Continuous learning
❖ Transparency and accountability
❖ Gender equality and social inclusion
❖ Promotion of participation and democracy

THRUST AREAS

The growing poverty, inequalities and fast urbanization in India and other developing countries pose several challenges as the development context is increasingly becoming complex. Besides prominent interventions in rural areas, APMAS has also done considerable work in strengthening urban SHG institutions, implementing water & sanitation initiatives and promotion of micro enterprises through SHG institutions in urban areas. The growing urbanisation and the increasing rural-urban divide urge the development players to focus on urban issues & challenges. Over the next 10-15 years, there will be a dire need to engage strategically on urban poverty reduction initiatives. APMAS recognises this fact and has taken into consideration while revisiting the thrust areas.

The 'Thrust Areas' were re-defined keeping in view of the re-defined vision & mission, eco-system assessment, opportunities available, ongoing programmes and capabilities of the organisation. APMAS will pursue the following *three vertical and five horizontal domains as major thrust areas* in its work for the coming years till 2026. It is non-negotiable that the activities shall always be advantage to the poor and marginalised communities for their holistic development and the impact shall be visible on the ground.
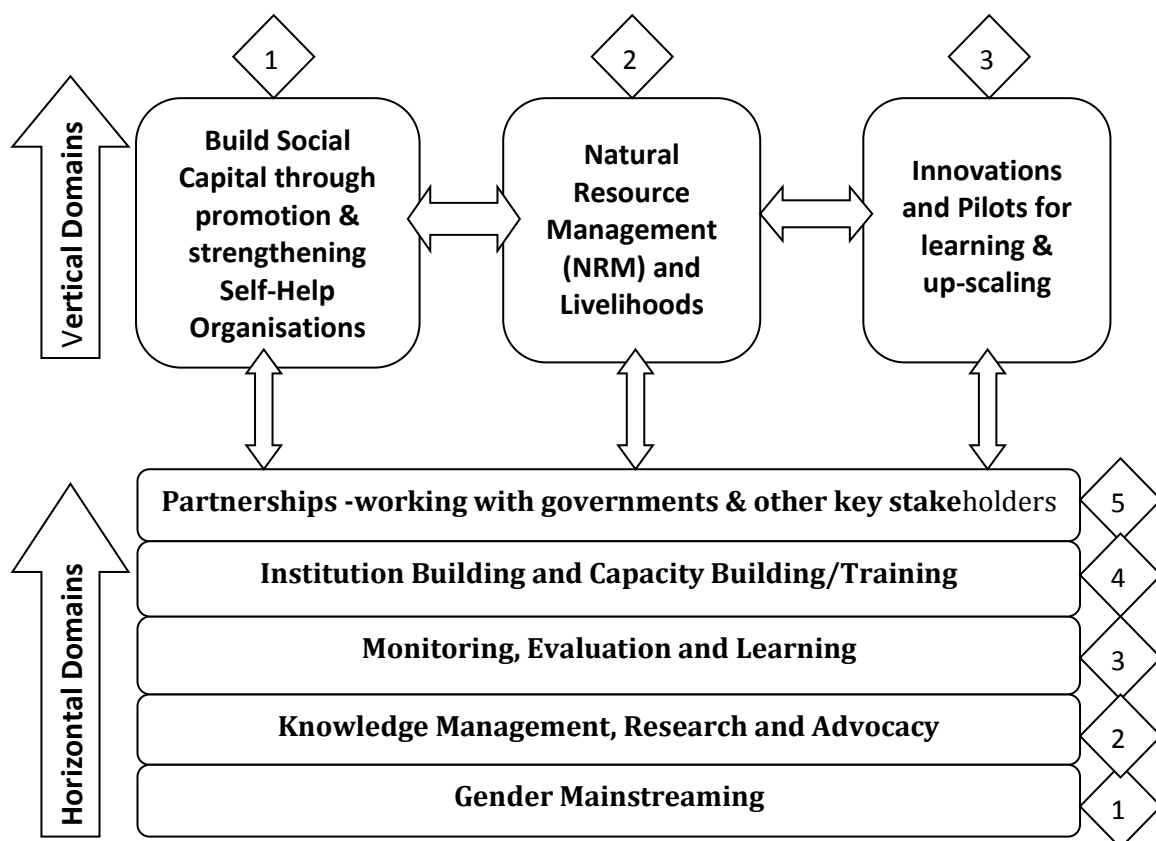
VERICAL DOMAINS

1. Building Social Capital

Focus will be promotion and strengthening of self help organisations such as women SHGs and their Federations, Farmer Producer Organisations and organisations of the marginalised communities to become member-owned institutions with standard systems & procedures and self-reliant to take up social and business enterprises. Enable and empower the communities to realize their full potential is a nucleus & integral part of this core domain. Working with flagship initiatives of the government like NRLM, NULM, RKVY, Skill Mission etc would be very important to realise the goal and objectives under this domain.

- *This domain has been the 'Core' & 'Identity' of APMAS*
- *The 'Core' within this Core will always be 'Women' for their socio-economic empowerment and enhancement of their decision making in the family and public realms*
- *The focus now will be equally on new form of self-help organizations besides that of women since it is indispensable to work with various people' organizations*
- *This domain requires 35% of overall resources (human, finance, material, time, expertise etc)*
- *Capacitate SHG platform to partner with other sectors such as education, health, livelihoods etc for maximizing benefits*

2. NRM and Livelihoods

Focus will be on soil, water & energy conservation measures; common property management; drought & risk mitigation measures; natural resources management; promotion of sustainable agricultural practices through integrated /natural farming; use of appropriate technology;/package of practise for productivity enhancement; collective procurement of inputs; value addition and collective marketing; partnerships & networking across the entire value chain; sharing of experience for leaning & linking and policy influencing etc

- *This domain has become prominent due to existing opportunities and the requirements*
- *This domain requires 45% of resources (human, finance, material, time, expertise, etc)*
- *Expansion of livelihoods through SHGs, farmers, landless, weavers etc and developing expertise*
- *Focus on creating assets, credit & market linkages for undertaking business enterprises*
- *Leverage from the government and explore schemes (like Mudra) for farm-based livelihoods*

3. Innovations and Pilots

Focus of the third vertical domain will be primarily for learning and up-scaling (by the government) towards attaining inclusive growth in the rural and urban communities by undertaking innovations and pilots such as making models/towards becoming model villages; solid waste management; rainwater harvesting, plantation; environment protection; sanitation; safe drinking water; skill development & livelihoods of urban poor etc.

- *This domain will remain as periphery*
- *Caution shall be taken to ensure that the peripheral activities will not surpass the core domains at any point of time*
- *Model villages will be taken up as peripheral activity and not Core*
- *Overall share of this domain will not exceed 20% of resources (human, finance, material, time, expertise etc)*

HORIZONTAL DOMAINS

1. Partnerships

The global movement for change is expanding and growing in strength every day with an ever-increasing diversity in social-change actors in a variety of ways, including long-term partnerships, shorter-term strategic alliances, one-on-one relationships and active participation in networks and coalitions. Working together is more effective than working in isolation. A partnership is an agreement to do something together that will benefit all involved, bringing results that could not be achieved by a single partner operating alone, and reducing duplication of efforts.

Given the challenging development context, partnerships are of great importance and key instrument in achieving the envisaged goal and objectives of the community development projects. A successful partnership enhances the impact and effectiveness of action through combined and more efficient use of resources and is distinguished by a strong commitment from each partner. Partnerships may be challenging but we strive to evolve and grow stronger. It is essential that basic parameters be created and agreed upon in to achieve sustained success.

The partnership is envisaged with the government, key development players and multi stakeholders. Working with the government is essential in terms of complementing its poverty reduction initiatives as well ensuring effective implementation of pro-poor policies and programmes and supporting innovations successfully piloted by NGOs. Partnerships with other national & international institutions, development players and like-minded organisations are also equally important in synergising efforts and influencing the development paradigms of the state.

2. Institution and Capacity Building

Capacity building and institution development of self-help organisations continue to be the core thrust area of APMAS. Institution building & capacity building refers to strengthening the knowledge, technical skills, competencies and abilities of people and organisations to overcome the causes of their exclusion & suffering and to realize their goals and objectives.

The institution and capacity building need to be taken forward to ensure that livelihoods of members of the community institutions are enhanced /diversified (through effective and efficient services of community institutions, linkages, good governance, management etc). Building robust institutions is the most effective means of changing oppressive power relations; and providing an opportunity for the poor to be mainstreamed at their own terms.

The following interventions will be focused under this domain:

- Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) are brought in under this realm apart from women self-help institutions
- So as to address the livelihoods issues of communities, required institutions (like FPOs) will be promoted and strengthened at higher level for undertaking collective and value chain activities and services
- To address issues at lower level, Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs), Common Interest Groups (CIGs), landless group etc will be promoted at the bottom level (village and panchayat)
- Microenterprises at the bottom level and medium & macro enterprises will be promoted at the higher level institutions
- In the light of sustainability of natural resource base and climate change, APMAS will strive to promote sustainable & climate resilient practices in its interventions especially

in agriculture and in preserving the scarce resources such as water, soil, energy and vegetation.

- APMAS will focus on marginalized communities in underdeveloped areas in line with the core value of the organization

3. Knowledge Management & Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

The generation of knowledge, its management and dissemination is critical not only for APMAS but also for various development players. Knowledge management is the process of capturing, disseminating and effectively using it for the development and creating long lasting effect. Currently the focus on MEL (monitoring, evaluation & learning) and knowledge repository is inadequate unlike on planning and implementation of development initiatives. Today the result-based or impact monitoring is the most important aspect of any development programme and hence equipping with these skills within the organisation across all the programmes and extending services to others is necessary. The MEL system will be streamlined across all the initiatives and the use of technology will be explored to capture the data from the field at regular intervals for undertaking course corrections and taking appropriate decisions for the effective and efficient implementation of programmes. The learning and experience will also be disseminated within and outside the organisation reaching out to wider audience. The tools for knowledge management and dissemination would be in terms of database, reports, process documentation, case studies, materials, website, photo and video documentation, archives /repository.

4. Research & Advocacy

Research & advocacy will continue to be an important domain of APMAS. Policy influencing in favour of strengthening sustainable community institutions for poverty reduction will be focused always thorough action research, pilots on ground, innovations, knowledge management and dissemination of such experiences. The major focus of research was on SHG sector so far and now the focus would be equally on the livelihoods sector as well since there are lot of issues need to be studied, documented and reported for bringing about positive changes in the lives and livelihoods of the poor and the marginalised. The findings of the research would be the basis for APMAS to make corrections if any in the ongoing programmes being implemented and for influencing policies and effective implementation of poverty reduction initiatives by the state.

5. Gender Mainstreaming

APMAS recognizes that while both women and men face deprivation and exploitation of their basic human rights and are vulnerable, in most instances, women face greater vulnerability. The subordinate position of women in the society makes them poorer and more vulnerable than men. Women face social and cultural discrimination, have less access to and control over resources, more deprived of opportunities, and are less likely to be involved and represented in decision-making bodies.

APMAS adopts a strategy of gender mainstreaming through various programmes in addition to certain women-focused interventions to address gender discrimination/inequalities. APMAS has laid down gender policy for action at both the organisational and programmatic levels. The policies, programmes and practices are clearly spelt out and carried forward to contributing towards gender equality within the organisation and through all our efforts.

GEOGRAPHIC /OPERATIONAL AREAS

- The states of **Telangana and Andhra Pradesh** are the priority regions for direct implementation work with the support of government, corporate and international & national donors. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will be the learning ground for taking the experience and knowledge forward to a wider audience across the country, influencing the policies and programmes of the state in favour of poor and marginalise and for up-scaling by the government.

- Implementation in other states **across the country** only with donor funding which can be a model and replicated at large scale by the government or other key stakeholders.

- **No geographic boundary** is set for secondary/ technical support services in view of short tenure of such assignments, reachability, cross-learning & dissemination and operational revenue – the priority regions could be across the country and other developing countries (South-South Cooperation)

KEY STRATEGIES

Following key strategies will be adopted at organizational level keeping in view of the ecosystem and to achieve the intended outcomes;
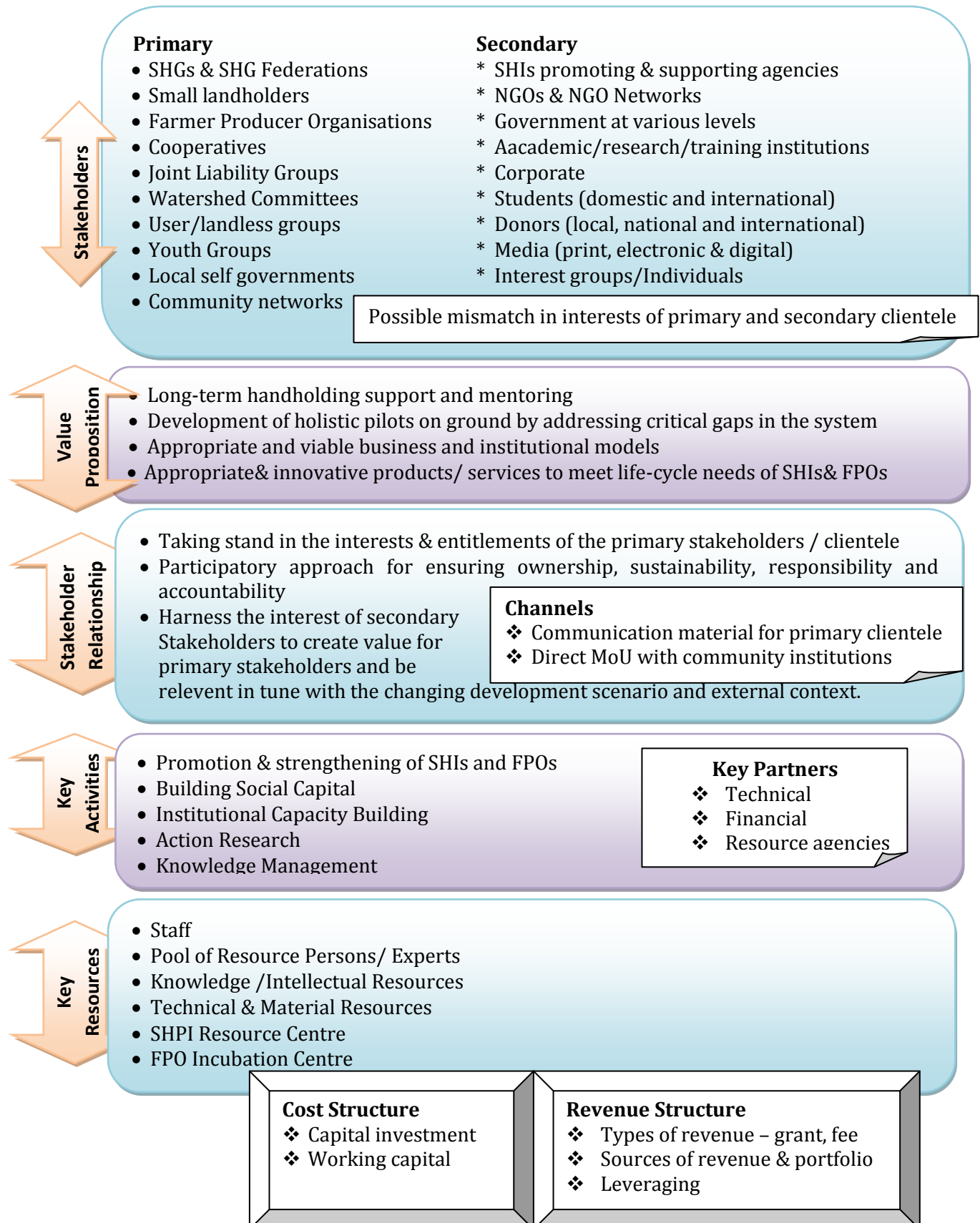
- In view of changes in the funding scenario, it is utmost important to leverage funds with other sources. APMAS will develop innovative business models with high returns (social/ economic/ environmental) from time to time so as to get required investors.
- It is also important to use the platform of government projects as an entry only (into a sector, geographic area). Once the entry is made, funding from other sources need to be mobilized (for same project/ area) so as to minimize the financial risks for the organization.
- So as to extend quality services to the clientele by pursuing the value of concern for quality, APMAS will endeavour to attract and retain quality human resources – staff, pool of Resource Persons/ ToTs/ Experts, Community Resource Persons.
- As far as direct implementation is concerned, one core strategy that will be adopted is quality rather than scale. While scale is required for financial sustainability of the organization, it will be ensured to limit the number of pilots to be developed as models on ground which serve as learning grounds and replication for others.
- APMAS will continue for necessary Networking and Partnerships for co-creation of appropriate practices and cross-learning.

KEY STRATEGIES
- ❖ *Fund leveraging with effective Fund portfolio*
- ❖ *Pitching high impact, innovative business models*
- ❖ *Securing other source funds for government projects*
- ❖ *Attracting and retaining quality human resources*
- ❖ *Limiting the number of pilots on ground to develop into high quality, replicable models*
- ❖ *Networking and Partnerships for cross-learning and co-creation*
- ❖ *Use of appropriate technology to design and deliver required services for the clientele in an effective and efficient way*
- ❖ *Programmatic approach –to be driven by internal programmatic needs rather than driven by external project requirements*

STRATEGIC DESIGN

The different elements of the strategic design of APMAS are summed up below as a framework. This is an indication of the aspects in each element. The details of different components will be worked out in the business plan of the organization.

Stakeholders

Primary
- SHGs & SHG Federations
- Small landholders
- Farmer Producer Organisations
- Cooperatives
- Joint Liability Groups
- Watershed Committees
- User/landless groups
- Youth Groups
- Local self governments
- Community networks

Secondary
* SHIs promoting & supporting agencies
* NGOs & NGO Networks
* Government at various levels
* Aacademic/research/training institutions
* Corporate
* Students (domestic and international)
* Donors (local, national and international)
* Media (print, electronic & digital)
* Interest groups/Individuals

Possible mismatch in interests of primary and secondary clientele

Value Proposition

- Long-term handholding support and mentoring
- Development of holistic pilots on ground by addressing critical gaps in the system
- Appropriate and viable business and institutional models
- Appropriate& innovative products/ services to meet life-cycle needs of SHIs& FPOs

Stakeholder Relationship

- Taking stand in the interests & entitlements of the primary stakeholders / clientele
- Participatory approach for ensuring ownership, sustainability, responsibility and accountability
- Harness the interest of secondary Stakeholders to create value for primary stakeholders and be relevent in tune with the changing development scenario and external context.

Channels
❖ Communication material for primary clientele
❖ Direct MoU with community institutions

Key Activities

- Promotion & strengthening of SHIs and FPOs
- Building Social Capital
- Institutional Capacity Building
- Action Research
- Knowledge Management

Key Partners
❖ Technical
❖ Financial
❖ Resource agencies

Key Resources

- Staff
- Pool of Resource Persons/ Experts
- Knowledge /Intellectual Resources
- Technical & Material Resources
- SHPI Resource Centre
- FPO Incubation Centre

Cost Structure
❖ Capital investment
❖ Working capital

Revenue Structure
❖ Types of revenue – grant, fee
❖ Sources of revenue & portfolio
❖ Leveraging

MILESTONES & OUTCOMES - 2026

So as to realize the above-mentioned vision and mission, certain outcomes are envisaged for the organization by 2026. While these outcomes are broad indicative of the direction, detailed aspects will come out in the annual plans based on the opportunities and resources for each year as milestones.

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