

About INFOS

INFOS is truly a community driven microfinance institution with the promotional support from NGOs. Many microfinance federations promoted by SIFFS, GDS, PREM, SERP, PEDO, AKRSP, DHAN Foundation, KMVS, and other NGOs in south and North came together to share their experience in 2004 at Madurai and decided to launch a national network of Microfinance federations. Subsequently they met again in 2005 at Madurai with the support of DHAN Foundation to chalk out their by-laws and to register as INFOS. It was incorporated in June 2006 and has come to gain an identity among the SHG federations in the country and position itself as a strong and vibrant network. DHAN Foundation came forward to found the INFOS and committed to promote INFOS as a sustainable and effective National network of Micro finance Federations.

Objectives of INFOS

- To improve capacity of the member federations to enable them achieve their purpose
- To facilitate co-learning among member federations by way of publishing newsletters and publications and organising meets
- To influence policy making bodies at state and national levels to bring in pro-poor policies
- To promote self regulation among the members so as to ensure accountability for their own development
- To facilitate credit access with affordability for member federations.

INFOS has a membership of 16 federations now and has wider geographical representation. The Network has initiated capacity building programmes through events such as policy workshops, regional conventions, national seminars, exchange visits, governance trainings for leaders, newsletters and established Regional chapters for South and the West India.



(Indian Network of Federations of Microfinance Self-Help Groups)

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Leaders Retreat for Community Based Organisations - I

Madurai Symposium 2007

**September 28 & 29, 2007
Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai**

**An INFOS Initiative
Indian Network of Federations of Microfinance
Self Help Groups**

Background

The Self Help Group (SHG) movement which began in the mid 1980's, has now gained tremendous momentum across the country. Over the years, the concept of SHG federations has proved its success in many ways. In India, there are many governmental and non governmental organisations implementing poverty reduction programmes through promotion of SHG federations. The remarkable growth of the SHG Movement in India has brought many concern and challenges to the fore. Sustainability of the SHG federations in the present scenario is a serious concern. Many factors contribute to the issue of sustainability and the factor which imparts more is the governance. Growth and sustainability of these people's organisation is greatly influenced by the people leaders, good governance process and practices in place. Purpose realisation by leaders on governance is very important and the opportunities for leaders to come together for reflecting on their self and growth process are limited. Mechanism such as training programmes and other capacity building programmes will only help in building their skill, knowledge and competency on particular activities. To make leaders play an anchoring role in setting the institutional agenda and directions for the future growth, different mechanisms needs to be carried out periodically for self renewal.

Keeping this in view, Indian Network of Federations of Microfinance Self Help Groups (INFOS), a network of SHG Federations at national level which strives to strengthen the Self Help Movement across the country believes that there should be a forum for leaders of SHG federations to come together to reflect on their self, practices, belief and value system in order to facilitate co-learning and to build synergy for the leaders to go back with fresh energy for the future growth of their SHG federations. Retreat is a forum to share experiences, reflections, learnings, achievements, challenging and frustrating moments. This platform facilitates to clarify the practices, derive inspiration from others and an opportunity to build the organisation's culture. Here retreat is organised for the leaders of SHG Federations. These leaders are the Governing Body members of the SHG federations and they are called people leaders. For leaders to play an effective role, SWOT analysis, environment and organisational appraisal is to be carried out periodically for self renewal. This continuous process of self renewal is called leaders retreat. Towards this pursuit, INFOS has planned to organise retreat periodically for the women leaders of the SHG Federations. Organising these retreats for leaders would help in strengthening their federations and to ensure the growth with quality.

Leaders' Retreat for Community Based Organisations

In this backdrop, INFOS takes the initiative to bring together the women leaders of SHG Federations across the country in the "Leaders' Retreat for Community Based Organisations". This retreat is scheduled on September 28 & 29, 2007 at Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai. The leaders retreat is being organised as a part of Madurai Symposium 2007 being hosted by DHAN Foundation, a promoter of the INFOS Network. Madurai Symposium facilitates the stakeholders in the development sector to converge on the

achievements, issues and challenges and above all it consolidates the experiences taken so far in different thematic areas. INFOS was promoted and nurtured in the earlier symposiums held during the year 2003 and 2005 and hence it is appropriate to host the First Women Leaders Retreat during Madurai Symposium 2007.

Objectives of the leaders retreat

- To provide a platform for the leaders to reflect on good governance process and practices and to share their growth process
- To evolve code of conduct for leadership

Components of the retreat

The retreat comprises two main components, namely

- **Experience Sharing:** Sharing of experience and reflections by leaders on their values, achievements, contributions, motivation factors, constraints and challenges based and facilitating environment for the growth of their federations that the could feel and observe in their growth process.
- **Evolving Code of conduct for leader:** Code of conduct for leaders is a set of guidelines laid down to govern the conduct of leaders intended to sustain and adhere to the basic principles of democracy, social justice, equality, human rights and good governance.

Participants

Women leaders who have made significant achievements and contributions for the growth of the SHG Federations promoted by various organisations across the country would participate in the event.

Retreat Process and schedule

First leaders' retreat is a two day programme. Leaders would come out with their reflective report for the retreat. Reflective report is a report written by leaders on their self and significant contributions for the growth of the SHG federations. Presentation of the reflective report by leaders in sub groups and evolving code of conduct for leaders at different levels (SHG and Federations) would take place in the first day. Synthesis of the retreat components and deliberations for the future growth process would happen on the second day.

Outcomes

The retreat would facilitate the initiation of self growth processes of leaders. Sharing of experience and learnings would help in building the knowledge and perspectives of the leaders and thereby enriching their content and quality. The retreat would give more hope, strength, fresh energy and encouragement for the leaders and their federations to energise for the future.