Soochna Seva project on

“Improving access to information of public schemes in backward districts in India”

[A joint initiative of Digital Empowerment Foundation & European Union in India during 2014-2018]

1 DESCRIPTION

1.1 Title

'SOOCHNA SEVA[1]: Facilitating information flow and management of Public Schemes for Citizen Empowerment and Good Governance in backward districts in India

1.2 Location

East India, Central India, and North India

Districts: West Champaran (Bihar); Guna (Madhya Pradesh); Barmer (Rajasthan); Tehri Garhwal (Uttarakhand); Ranchi (Jharkhand)

1.3 Summary

Total duration of the action (*months*):	60 months (2014-2018)
Objectives of the action	***<Overall objective(s)>*** • Address the larger issue of poverty, social exclusion and inequity of marginalised groups through information empowerment on public schemes towards entitlement gains and thereby promoting and strengthening good governance practice by local administration. ***<Specific objective(s)>*** • Provide enhanced channels and points for information services delivery to target groups at their doorsteps towards informed choices, decisions and entitlement benefits; • Facilitate towards an integrated district level public scheme information management framework & develop a citizen engagement and entitlement mechanism in public scheme administering process and its outcome and bridge administration-citizen network deficits.
Target group(s)[2]	**50000 BPL Families in 5 Backward Districts** – 10000 families Scheduled Tribes, 10000 families Scheduled Castes, 10000 minorities, OBCs (Other Backward Classes) and others and 20000 families from the general social segments who are socially and economically poorer. **100,000 total beneficiaries:** 50000 BPL families will be covered under the education, health, livelihood, employment and financial inclusion access schemes. At least 2 individuals per household shall be covered. At least 40000 women and girls shall be covered in health and livelihood access programmes especially child and maternal health care

[1] Soochna means information in India and 'Seva' is service

[2] "Target groups" are the groups/entities who will be directly positively affected by the action at the action purpose level.

	150000 Households from poor social and income groups in 5 backward districts – Additionally the proposed action will try and reach out to another 150000 households and provide public scheme information services and entitlement benefits to another 300000 beneficiaries (2 per household) during project period and through 1200 service points.
Final beneficiaries	**400,000 overall beneficiaries:** Overall, an estimated 400000 individual beneficiaries is expected to benefit from the action during the project period directly as well as indirectly in 5 BRGF districts.
Estimated results	• **SOOCHNA SEVA FRAMEWORK →** Put in place the SOOCHNA SEVA public scheme information framework (dissemination and management) at district and sub-ordinate public offices (Panchayat & Block offices); adopt a multi-pronged approach in information services delivery and access using ICT and non-ICT tools. This involves setting up 1200 public scheme information delivery and access points (Panchayat Soochna Seva Kendras) for final gains in entitlements in 5 backward districts. Employ and engage 300 fellows (Soochna Seva Fellows) in 5 districts during project period of 5 years to reach out to final groups and beneficiaries with information services and entitlement gains. • **INFORMATION SERVICES DELIVERY & CITIZEN ENTITLEMENT GAINS →**Monitor the effective use of information at community (final beneficiary) and service provider level (local authority) and take corrective action through continuous learning and feedback mechanism, ensuring information access leads to better entitlements while reaching out to benefit 50000 households covering 100000 beneficiaries directly and indirectly another 150000 households and 300000 beneficiaries during project period. The gain from the action outcome shall be measured in terms of information services delivered and received on public scheme/initiatives and final entitlement gains from information services in identified 6 areas of intervention – education, health, livelihood, employment, financial inclusion & social security; • **EVOLVING A SOOCHNA SEVA MODEL →** Evolve a replicable ICT enabled information services delivery, access and entitlement based model - 'Soochna Seva' and advocate for scaling up the initiatives in other target districts / states through public - private partnerships / investments. Work out a model that is cost effective with minimum investment, operation and running cost and sustainable with service delivery channels or points are self-sustainable in a social enterprise model.
Main activities	• **Mapping :** Mapping of existing public schemes / initiatives & identification ; Mapping of means to access public information for citizens at village level using ICT and non ICT tools & final entitlement gains from information

	provisions; Mapping existing public information dissemination mechanisms at district level and below within administrative framework; • **Project formulation & design:** Action project design involving stakeholders and partners including user citizens, local administration and partners; project finalisation and readiness; role assignment of stakeholders and partners. • **Project implementation**: deployment of Soochna Seva programme at Panchayat level; deployment of action methods/approaches using ICT and non-ICT tools and applications. Main activities – awareness and advocacy, group mobilisation, transparency and accountability measures, progress tracking, research and result dissemination.
Partners	• Idea & Implementation: Digital Empowerment Foundation • Supporting Agency: European Union in India

The 'SOOCHNA SEVA' Project will address the following expected results:

- Improve access of public scheme information in complete life cycle (information access and gains in government entitlements) in identified areas to identified target groups with deployment of an integrated information communication process using ICT and non-ICT tools including mobile camps, toll free number, SMS newsletter, information vans and citizen call office.
- This will help to develop an integrated district level information dissemination and entitlement management framework to adopt for other governance programmes especially catering to the information dissemination, citizen entitlement gains and management towards improved local governance with transparency and accountability.

Target Groups & Beneficiaries

- **50000 BPL Families in 5 Backward Districts**: These families will be selected based on their BPL status (Below Poverty Line as delineated by the government). The composition of these families will be distributed into social segments – 10000 families Scheduled Tribes, 10000 families Scheduled Castes, 10000 minorities, OBCs (Other Backward Classes) and others and 20000 families from the general social segments who are socially and economically poorer.

- **100000 total beneficiaries:** 50000 BPL families will be covered under the education, health, poverty & employment access schemes. At least 2 individuals per household shall be covered

- **400000 overall beneficiaries:** Additionally, an estimated another 300000 beneficiaries is expected to benefit indirectly from 150000 households through the proposed action.

Therefore, an estimated total of 400000 beneficiaries will overall benefit from the action during the project period directly as well as indirectly.

- **40000 women & girl beneficiaries:** Out of the above 100000 direct beneficiaries at least 40000 women and girls shall be covered in health and livelihood access programmes especially child and maternal health care