



Social Work & Research Centre, SWRC ([Barefoot College](#))

Social Support Fellowship

Organization background/capacity

Social Work and Research Centre (popularly known as the Barefoot College) is a community-based grassroots organisation working since 1972 based on the Gandhian concept of reaching the last person. It was founded by Sanjit 'Bunker' Roy, to harness the skills and intelligence of rural people and 'specialists' people with degrees and formal professional competence, to work together to empower local communities. The Barefoot College aimed to specifically address the issues concerning marginalised communities and individuals, including women, the exploited and the impoverished rural poor living on less than minimum/living wages. The work took shape in practical domains like water, education, solar, health, advocacy and rural livelihoods including handicrafts.

Barefoot has also sought to enable marginalised rural communities to participate in planning, executing, and maintaining their own frameworks for development. These processes have provided the opportunity to the rural poor to lift themselves out of relative poverty with dignity and self-respect. The Barefoot College discussed, defined and consolidated the non-negotiables within its body politic (equality, collective decision-making, decentralisation, self-reliance, austerity and openness to learning skills).

Barefoot College has been a place where sustainable ideas and the practical knowledge of the poor have been put into practice through work in education and skill development. This work has, in turn, resulted in large-scale impact in access to drinking water, rainwater harvesting, solar electrification, non-formal education, health, conservation, women's empowerment and culture. Barefoot has effectively demonstrated the potential of giving the rural poor an opportunity and support to develop self-sufficiency by drawing upon a combination of traditional knowledge (symbolized by "barefoot") and demystified modern skills.

The organisation has seminally contributed to the conceptualisation of certain development programmes and initiatives which have later been adopted and scaled up by governments. The basis of all these programmes was the practical knowledge and skills of rural people, upgraded by professional competence. The 'Shiksha Karmi' programme was born from the initiative and learning to increase formal school attendance of children and teachers; Handpump Mistris (mechanics) was another effort to bring in youth, specifically dalits and women by enhancing their practical capabilities so that they could do a better job than the elite technical state apparatus fixing and maintaining hand pumps. The Women's Development Programme (WDP) of the Government of Rajasthan, drew on the framework of women's group formation and local leadership in Tilonia. The well known Solar Mamas project brought in women as "solar engineers", addressing the issue of transfer of technical knowledge to the semi-literate and concentrating on demonstrating the resource of middle-aged rural women. It has been scaled up nationally and internationally, in collaboration with the Government of India since 2007.

Project Proposal:

In order to deal with a post covid impact on the health and development crisis faced by rural communities, and prepare for a third wave of Covid-19, with various reports predicting possibly more devastating outcomes, Barefoot College is preparing a cadre of "Rural Covid Warriors" under a program called "Social Support Fellowship". Every member of staff working with the organisation is, and shall be involved in an

ongoing community immersion exercise. This is mainly to understand contemporary ground-level issues. Each one of them will be given the responsibility of one village to plan and execute the programme.

Amongst others, the village level workers will look at various government schemes which have been announced during the pandemic, which lie unutilised because of marginalisation and lack of access including the digital divide. Large numbers live in last-mile villages with limited network access. The 'karyakartas' will reach out to the marginalised communities living in these respective villages to understand, learn and address certain gaps. Their roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the points below:

Covid Impact related -

1. Reaching out to communities (mostly who test positive or showing symptoms) to understand their willingness to isolate at an isolation centre (Old campus) or home, and support them depending on their choice of options. They would also collect information from people who tested positive and recovered from Covid-19. Learning from their experiences and understanding the difficulties they faced during that phase.
2. Pushing awareness material to bust some myths and tackle misinformation spreading in the villages. Especially focusing on the hesitancy against the vaccination drive. Collect information related to vaccination of people surveyed.
3. Involve ANM, ASHA or Anganwadi (health) workers in the survey. Collaborate with grassroots government workers to ensure more credibility as well as gather information from past and present Covid victims from these workers. Focus will be on providing necessary and promised government support to people who lost their family members due to Covid.
4. Understand whether people are suffering from post-Covid symptoms and try to intervene accordingly. Provide necessary ambulance support if necessary.
5. Extend necessary support for people to benefit from schemes promised by the government in case of a covid-registered death.

Covid Response (Socio-Economic) -

1. To understand whether people are benefitting from government schemes. Mainly to know and facilitate the status of their Ration, Pension, NREGA, Chiranjeevi Bhima, Kisan Yojana, and any other schemes ensuring social security for rural communities and help fill gaps, if any.
2. Education survey to know the gaps regarding online/digital learning. If there are communities with no smartphones or any medium to learn through online classes, how could we support them (a possible intervention to start a digital bridge school if there are enough children providing quality education to last-mile communities).
3. To know if parents/guardians who are the only earning source in the family have died due to Covid-19, lend support to children for their expenses and education. Many organisations are supporting children in such cases. Other benefits from central and state governments as well.
4. A general health-related survey including covid-19 related questions and other relevant diseases prevalent in rural communities.

Way Forward -

This data shall be sent frequently to Barefoot College (BC) campus from the field where few staff would

work on analysing and creating a master sheet of critical information. This work shall continue over a period of 12 months. 100 staff would be involved to collect data from 200 villages in Silora & Jawaja blocks of Ajmer district. There will be two phases to the way forward of this grant. Phase I involves establishing a direct link between marginalised communities and the government to make sure they are connected with eligible welfare schemes. Phase II involves a dedicated team from BC working to design, develop and deliver effective and sustainable projects to create a positive change in the communities who have been affected due to the pandemic based on the data collected. Mode of operation of the organisation will depend on collective decision-making involving department/ section staff and field centre (decentralised network) coordinators. During the same time, BC will be preparing a module to the existing staff to up skill, capacity build and train to take the organisation forward. This will result in creating a concrete second-line leadership team.

Budget for 1 Year-

All the staff shall be paid minimum wages under the “highly skilled” category, according to wages decided by the Government of Rajasthan throughout the timeline of this project.

Min wages @Rs 9780 per person per month	= 9780 * 100 * 12 = Rs 11,736,000 (\$ 156,480)
Transportation @Rs 600 per person per month	= 600 * 100 * 12 = Rs 720,000 (\$ 9,600)
Documentation, account keeping, communications, Photography, project management, etc.	= Rs 1,500,000 (\$ 20,000)
Admin, overhead and contingencies costs @5%	= Rs 6,97,800 (\$ 9,304)
Total Project Cost	= Rs 1,46,53,800 (\$ 1,95,384)

For more information related to the program, please contact jaswanth@swrctilonia.org

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