

district levels. One unique feature about the APMAS team is that every person has spent long years working in the villages directly with the rural poor, and hence has deep personal familiarity with the issues to be covered in the training. This ensures that the participants not just get only a theoretical perspective as is usually the case, but benefit from live issues straight from the grassroots. APMAS also enjoys support of highly reputed resource persons from other organizations who add value to these programmes.

All the participants who would like to join the National Training Programme on PTM in the context of SHGs, and thereby be a part of a unique history, may contact:

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ANDHRA PRADESH MAHILA ABHIVRUDDHI SOCIETY (APMAS)

NATIONAL TOT ON PARTICIPATORY TRAINING METHODOLOGIES (PTM) IN THE CONTEXT OF SHGS

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Among the many initiatives taken in our country since the last many decades for poverty alleviation, the one involving organizing the poor, building their capacities and expanding their livelihood opportunities has been found to be the most successful. In many parts of the country, women from poor households are being organized into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and encouraged to take up thrift and credit activities. Subsequently, they are linked with financial institutions to obtain credit for various income generation activities. The SHG activities have now taken the shape of a movement and have found support in many quarters.

However, things are not as rosy as they appear from outside. A large proportion of SHGs are found to be very weak in their functioning. They suffer from a number of inherent deficiencies. Many become defunct a short while after they start. A few continue to function perfunctorily without realizing their true potential. At the best, they receive a small dole of financing as a symbolic gesture, and that ends any further attention on them. A closer analysis of this state of affairs reveals that it is mainly the lack of capacity building efforts on part of the facilitating agency. Many promoting agencies and their staff fail to appreciate the importance of taking the SHGs through a well structured and need based capacity building plan. Just because of these lacunae, a large number of poor households are losing the golden opportunity of coming out of poverty.

Making the poor lose this opportunity due to our own negligence is unpardonable. For generations they have remained poor; and will again miss out due to someone else's mistakes. No development professional working at the grassroots for the poor would be happy at such a state of affairs. Ensuring that the poor are organized not just as SHGs, but as **well functioning** SHGs is the crux of the matter. Every development professional should feel challenged by the prospect of facilitating the formation and development of highly credible and creditworthy institutions of the poor. The creation of such institutions alone will lead to a real elimination of poverty, which can be the cause of tremendous satisfaction for the development professional who has worked to this end.

Capacity building for the members of SHGs and their apex institutions can be achieved with great degree of perfection provided certain basic aspects are kept in mind. A large majority of the rural poor, particularly the women, are illiterate and have never been in a classroom like situation

before. Their span of attention and ability to concentrate on complicated concepts is limited. There are other individual, family and social pressures on their minds as well. Conducting a capacity building session following the usual methodologies will be of no use. A well designed participatory training methodology will work best to help them understand and internalize the SHG concepts. Mastery over Participatory Training Methodologies (PTM) is therefore an essential skill required for any development professional that feels committed to his responsibilities and aims at transforming the lives of the poor.

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS) is conducting the National level week long training programme on PTM in the context of SHGs from This training programme will be quite different from many other trainings offered for development professionals. A hallmark of this programme will be that the participants will acquire the skill through a lot of practice, since the best way of learning training skills is by actually doing it. Participants will also learn through firsthand experience about various training methodologies, role of trainers and training design, group work, giving and receiving feedback, and working through emerging training circumstances. Practice sessions will be designed in such a way that the strengths and weaknesses of each individual participant are highlighted, and the feedback given by the group is useful for making valuable improvements in the training performance of the individual.

The programme will be demanding on the time and concentration abilities of the participants; however, the intensity will ensure that the participants are left with a lifelong skill which will help them bring magic in the lives of the people who are unfortunate to be born poor. The training venue, in Hyderabad city, will be physically very comfortable to complement the intellectually and emotionally rigorous programme. APMAS will charge an all inclusive programme fees of Rs.10,000 for each participant.

APMAS is now nationally recognized as a serious actor for promoting quality in the SHG movement. Its flagship National training programme on SHG federations is one of the most looked-forward event in the national training calendar. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, whose achievements in the field of women empowerment through SHGs are now internationally acclaimed, is itself relying heavily on APMAS to support capacity building and quality enhancement at the state and