



# The Bihar Project

Awakening the Sleeping Giant through Creative Solutions for Development and Poverty Alleviation (Vihara Foundation 2009)

September 2009

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Bihar Project is a multi-disciplined integrated sustainable approach to fast track the overall goal and objective of poverty alleviation and development of rural Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. To date, much of the region remains impoverished and poverty stricken in need of solutions that could make a significant difference in the livelihood of people.

The premise of this proposal is based on the following problem statements, “Why do farmers who work so hard and produce in the region continue to remain poor and be subjects to underdevelopment. What are the overall effects on the economic base affecting poverty, what factors are causing this, and how can it be overcome?” Investigating the answers to these provides the rationales for guiding and converging strategies towards developing practical solutions.

The Bihar Project presents an approach called Comprehensive Rural Sustainable Development Planning (CRSDP, pronounced “CRISP”). CRSDP is a methodology developed that converges socio-economic-environmental-technological inputs (research and development concepts working in synergy) to effect positive outcome of rural community sustainable development and poverty alleviation. CRSDP sets out to achieve the following objectives, but is not limited to:

- empowering decision making and negotiating through community reorganization
- conceiving new and innovative creative financing novel to fighting poverty
- leveraging capital investments for optimizing and improving farming model
- critical and foremost, facilitating irrigation and groundwater sustainability
- optimizing crop planning and R&D to achieve highest field productivity outputs
- implementing new and renewable energy technology for rural development
- bringing the agrarian processing industries near the fields of production
- evading losses in market supply-chain trade revenues to farmers
- enabling higher income and equitable distribution of wealth
- empowering livelihoods of women and farmers
- improving nutrition and child health and welfare
- reversing migrant village labour movement in search of employment

## **Objectives or Expected Outcomes:**

The Project aims to address poverty and development by optimizing agricultural productivity output and management process (the base economic activity of the region). This is projected to increase sustainable jobs/employment, rural incomes, and quality of life and human development index of the rural sector communities. Further, improvements in agricultural

planning and productivity and rural infrastructure, cooperative development, provision of financial services, and institutional support through organizational and skills training for beneficiaries in village communities, will be accomplished.

The Project is designed to optimize the agriculture process and at the same time reduce load of agriculture on environment, all while focusing on the objective of poverty reduction. The project's objective support the Government's strategic objectives of economic and social development, increased private sector participation, improvements in agricultural production, more efficient use of increasingly scarce irrigation water, development of rural areas, reduction of poverty, and environmental and social sustainability. The project scope includes agriculture infrastructure improvement, cooperative development, community basic infrastructure (education and health), and new and creative financial arrangements and institutional support services.

### **Approach**

Comprehensively addressing the issues of poverty alleviation and development is proposed using a whole system thinking approach complementing already underway individualized approaches.

This proposal aims to deliver a poverty alleviation and development methodology that integrates sustainable inputs as efficient community organizing and eco-technology, leading to an increase in crude agrarian production with an estimated minimum measure of thirty-three percent, and with financial returns estimated well above what would typically be anticipated (i.e., achieved through changes in the trade supply-chain mechanism).

This proposal is intended to be facilitated in three phases, respectively:

- **Phase 1:** conduct feasibility study to guide project design and scoping, spanning 100 villages in two research locations, Nalanda, Bihar, and Ballia, Uttar Pradesh;
- **Phase 2:** run two 500 hectare prototypes at research locations to demonstrate productivity optimization through sustainable inputs and the advantage of farmers' cooperative structuring; and,
- **Phase 3:** System deployment from two 500 hectare units throughout all 100 villages, with engagement of full operations of farmers cooperative, and all objectives supporting the comprehensive rural sustainable development

### **Economic Creativity**

The Bihar Project proposes a novel approach to accessing creative finance for funding development. This is a framework to self-reliance to enable all the aforementioned poverty reduction and development objectives to become attainable.

The Bihar Project creative finance scheme is based on a concept of macro-economic modeling to constitute macro-economic lending. It relies on a concept of Total Life Cycle (e)valuation (TLCv) of equity that exist in the regional agrarian economy, but only accessible through sustainable development intervention. Structuring such creative financing would enable development self-financing, requiring minimal donor and government financial intervention and subsidies.



**Present Actions**

The Bihar Project has teamed with Indian non-government organization Prabhat and is already deployed in the field surveying and collecting data and designing the project to meet the specific needs of two selected research *beta* locations, Nalanda, Bihar, and Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. The Bihar project has defined a research scope to 100 typical North India villages, and already has garnered the cooperative willingness of hundreds of farmers comprising thousands of hectareage; these are the basis of what would become the first development milestone, constituting the creation of a farmers’ cooperative entity.

**Strategic Intent**

Overall, the strategic intent of CRSDP is projected to compliment many of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals through demonstration of significantly improving the socio-economic-environmental-cultural basis necessary for improving the human development index of the research locations. This is expected to generate data and investment confidence for system-wide deployment throughout the rest of the region and State, and hopefully, anywhere there is needs and applicability in India, and potentially, globally. In the end, the benefit of human quality of life would be improved, together with a world of sustainable abundance.

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