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ACCESS ASSIST is set up as a charitable trust committed to providing services, forums and knowledge resources that will advance and support greater access to financial services to the poor and low income households in India. Driven by support from a vast cross-section of stakeholders, ASSIST continues add value through its convening role in the microfinance and inclusive finance sector through the

ACCESS ASSIST was registered in 2009 and started operations in 2010 as an affiliate of ACCESS Services to provide exclusive focus on the monumental challenge of bringing a large segment of the population into the formal financial system. While part of the microfinance programme portfolio of ACCESS at the time, consisting of technical assistance and consulting, research and studies at 'Tier 2' and incubating and strengthening of community based microfinance organizations at 'Tier 1', transitioned completely to ASSIST, the brand ownership of the flagship Microfinance India Initiative including the Summit, annual publications and the Awards, was and continues to be jointly shared by ACCESS and ASSIST. With changes in the microfinance sector emanating from the Andhra Pradesh crisis in 2010, ASSIST evolved its work in the area of social performance management and towards rebuilding credibility of the MFI sector.

ACCESS ASSIST Vision

To be the leading Gateway Agency in India to integrate the financial value chain that helps to build an inclusive financial system within which the poor are empowered and are able to access financial services to overcome their vulnerabilities.

ACCESS ASSIST Mission

To consistently work towards strengthening the enabling environment by informing and influencing policies, creating platforms and facilitating dialogue among stakeholders towards developing client centric products, processes that will help in effective organising of the demand and catalyzing supply to meet the financial needs of the poor.

Inclusive Finance India Summit platform, the annual sector publications and policy dialogues at the national and state level, ASSIST has resources and professionals to provide technical advisory to institutions on operational and management systems, along with specialization in specific thematic areas including client protection, financial literacy and community based microfinance processes. With financial literacy and inclusion projects on the ground, ASSIST draws practical experiences from the field

to develop its professional strength for these sectoral roles. While on the one hand ASSIST organizes the demand through programmes on the ground, at another level, it engages with stakeholders to catalyze supply of financial services.

- **Building Institutional Capacities:** The strategy largely focuses on building strong institutions on the ground, which helps in accomplishing greater outreach, but also in organizing the demand. To support these diverse institutional models, ASSIST sets up Resource centres to hand hold and engage in institutional strengthening of emerging NGO-MFIs, SHPIs (Self Help Promoting Institutions), SHG Federations, Community based cooperatives. For e.g. Project Gramya Shakti in Odisha.
- **Advisory and Support Services:** ASSIST provides advisory and technical support services to key stakeholders in the sector, including to MFIs, SHPIs, donors, industry associations, apex Development Finance Institutions such as SIDBI and NABARD, Bilateral and multilateral organizations. For e.g. feasibility study for setting up of credit bureau for IFC; Costs, interest rates, and the margin of MFIs for SIDBI; Financial awareness and Counseling for the World Bank.
- **The Responsible Finance Initiative:** In order to promote responsible finance and ethical financial activities, ASSIST undertakes policy research and organizes various events to promote policy dialogue between stakeholders. For e.g. Inclusive Finance India Summit; Inclusive Finance India Awards; Inclusive Finance India Report; Responsible Finance Microfinance Vision Documents; and various thematic retreats.

In 2013, ASSIST initiated a targeted programme strategy on policy advocacy and stakeholder convergence as consortium partner of SIDBI in DFID's Poorest States Inclusive Growth (PSIG) Programme on enhancing access to finance. Further, with financial inclusion becoming a high priority of the government and rapid policy developments in the space by the RBI, in 2014, ASSIST strategically initiated the transition from focusing on the microfinance sector to the broader ambit of financial inclusion. Year 2014 was a significant milestone in ASSIST with formal expansion of its scope of work to inclusive finance.

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