

SRUTI FELLOWSHIP POLICY

1. SRUTI'S VISION

The Society for Rural, Urban & Tribal Initiative (SRUTI) was founded on the belief that individuals have a key role to play in bringing about social change through peaceful and democratic processes.

SRUTI's vision is to work towards a society based on the core values of justice, equity, compassion, and respect and dignity for all; it aims to harness the power of individuals in doing so.

As the name of the organization suggests, one of the key objectives of SRUTI is to support individuals and associations of people who **initiate pioneering work** of social significance at the grass root level in rural, urban and tribal areas in India.

2. THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

The Fellowship Programme was instituted in 1983, as SRUTI's core strategy in attaining its vision. It is designed to recognise, tap and nurture the potential of individuals to bring about change at the grass roots. It awards Fellowships to individuals with the necessary grit, determination, commitment and dynamism to work among some of the most marginalized communities in India, and mobilise them to find effective solutions to their most pressing problems through collective social action.

One of the challenges such individuals invariably face is that of supporting themselves and their families; and they are often compelled to abandon their work in the absence of a stable source of funding.

The foremost aim of a SRUTI Fellowship, therefore, is to offer a basic level of financial security to such individuals and groups - known as SRUTI Fellows - through a modest honorarium, so that they can pursue their chosen path.

Over and above the financial support offered, the SRUTI Fellowship also seeks to facilitate the work of the Fellows through a range of inputs, described later in this document.

The financial and other support provided by SRUTI under the Fellowship Programme is time-bound. However, our association with - and respect for the Fellows - is not limited by tenures: Once a Fellow, always a Fellow.

3. WHO WE SUPPORT

3a) Eligibility criteria

- i. SRUTI supports committed individuals / groups, working full-time with communities at the grass roots in rural, urban and tribal areas to build local level people's organisations. This is an area of activity that is by and large not supported by conventional funding sources.
- ii. SRUTI supports people with the vision of building a society that is rooted in the idea of dignity, opportunity and the benefit of marginalized and vulnerable communities through democratic means and within the constitutional framework.
- iii. Since the idea is to support social change initiators - the preferred entry age group for the SRUTI Fellowship is 25-35.

3b) SRUTI does NOT support:

- i. Individuals or groups with any religious, communal or caste-based ideology and practice.
- ii. Individuals or groups with any background, ideology or practice of violence.
- iii. An office bearer of a political party; anyone holding an elected office in parliament, state legislature or *panchayati raj* institution.
- iv. Groups that are already receiving grants from elsewhere or whose organisations are registered under FCRA.

4. WHAT THE FELLOWSHIP OFFERS

The SRUTI Fellowship offers both financial and non-financial support to Fellows (saathis) their team members (karyakartas), and their organisations (sangathans)

4a) Financial support

Three kinds of financial support are available under the SRUTI Fellowship Programme:

- i) Honorarium: This is modest personal support to the Fellows and their team members.
- ii) Organizational Assistance: Limited financial support to meet recurring needs of the organization on local travel, stationery and communication, support for local programs and events.
- iii) Emergency, Relief & Welfare support is available under the SRUTI Welfare and Solidarity Fund (SWSF). Under this revolving fund, financial support is provided for education of children, medical emergencies, other personal crises and disaster relief. (See SWSF Regulations for details)

4b) Non-financial Support for Training & Facilitation

In addition to the financial support outlined above, SRUTI facilitates the work of the Fellows and their organisations through capacity building processes, including training programs, workshops, exposure visits and information dissemination. These processes also help build capacities and leadership within local communities. In addition, SRUTI assists Fellows in mobilising support for their issues and campaigns at local, state and national level. This entails advocating their causes to parliamentarians, policy makers and the media. SRUTI also links Fellows with relevant groups, networks and alliances and provides them a platform for meetings, consultations and workshops on issues of regional and national importance.

5) TENURE OF THE SRUTI FELLOWSHIPS

The minimum period for which a SRUTI Fellowship is awarded is 2 years, and the maximum, 9 years.

- i) Extensions of the Fellowship within this 2-9 year period are based on reviews and evaluations. Extensions are therefore neither automatic, nor to be taken for granted.
- ii) The process for phasing out of Fellowship and grounds for terminations are outlined separately in Point 10 of this document.

*Beyond this, in extraordinary cases, or times of extreme need, support may be further extended to existing Fellows / groups. This will be based on the discretion

and collective assessment, approval and sign-off of at least 3 members of the SRUTI Fellowship team, Finance personnel and Directors / Executive Director.

6) HOW TO APPLY

1. Applications are accepted via letters and emails in Hindi or English.
2. Applications may be sent to SRUTI throughout the year.
3. There is no formal format for applications; however, they must include the following information
 - i. Basic personal details of the applicant
 - ii. A brief background of his/her work and approach
 - iii. An outline of the key issues and challenges in the geo-political context of the work area
 - iv. Details of work outreach, including communities engaged with and number of villages covered
 - v. A brief outline of the applicant's work history and where applicable, organizational structure
 - vi. A vision for the future
 - vii. If possible, 2 references from respected individuals and /or groups at the local / state or national level.

7) SELECTION CRITERIA & PROCESS

All applications are processed on a strictly first-come-first-served basis. SRUTI's effort is to process applications as swiftly as possible. However, there may be a lag between the time that an application is received and the selection process is initiated.

The selection process, outlined below, is generally completed within 5-6 months.

- i) All applications that satisfy basic eligibility criteria are shortlisted
- ii) These are then assessed and reviewed and further shortlisted
- iii) Applicants in this shortlist are contacted and wherever needed, additional details are sought
- iv) Simultaneously, if possible, feedback about candidates is sought from SRUTI's network
- v) This is followed by field visits by the SRUTI Programme team to the applicant's area
- vi) A detailed assessment based on the field visit is prepared and discussed by the team, and a list of proposed Fellows drawn up
- vii) Details of the proposed Fellows are shared with the SRUTI Board prior to finalization of the above list
- viii) Fellows are intimated about their selection and a Fellowship agreement letter is issued.

8) REPORTING, PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS & MONITORING

SRUTI expects and encourages a regular and transparent flow of communication and information regarding the work, achievement and challenges faced in the Fellows' areas.

All Fellows are expected to comply with SRUTI's reporting and other requirements. These include timely submission of annual work plans, six-monthly financial and narrative reports; and active participation in SRUTI's meetings and workshops.

SRUTI follows an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process involving regular field visits and in-depth interactions with Fellows and their teams. This process is conducted in a spirit of mutual sharing and learning and SRUTI seeks the full co-operation and involvement of Fellows therein.

9) SOURCES & NATURE OF FUNDS FOR THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Funds for the honorarium and organizational assistance component of the Fellowship support is met through funds raised by SRUTI through Indian sources. These include individual donations, institutional grants and independent resource mobilization efforts such as scrap collection and fund-raising events. Interest on Corpus Endowment Grants is another source of revenue.

Funds for managing the Fellowship Programme and conducting the facilitation and training activities are raised from both Indian and foreign sources.

SRUTI also actively encourages local resource mobilization by the Fellows to foster participation and ownership by the community, thereby paving the way to sustainability of the organisations.

10) PHASING OUT & TERMINATION OF FELLOWSHIPS

- i) Phasing out of support: SRUTI encourages planned phasing out of Fellowships in mutual consultation with Fellows
- ii) Termination of support: Fellowship support is categorically withdrawn under any of the following circumstances:
 - a) Where a Fellow, team member or group is proved to be involved with any gender/child/human rights violation, or violent ideology of any kind.
 - b) If a Fellow, team member or group is proved to be involved with any kind of financial fraud, misappropriation or illegal dealings.

- c) Where there is suppression of information that may in any way work to the detriment of SRUTI, any of the other Fellows or SRUTI's partners.
- d) If a Fellow (or any of his/her team members) decides to contest elections, whether *panchayati*, state or national.

{Reviewed and updated in 2014}