

REVIEW AND PLANNING MEET



**BHEDAGHAT
JABALPUR
MADHYA PRADESH
JULY 12-14, 2026**



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INTRODUCTION

Sam-Haq Trust has, over the past two years, built a body of field-based work concerned with destitution, homelessness, and the criminalisation of marginal populations. This work has been carried forward through two units, based in Delhi and Mumbai, each engaging directly with vulnerable populations, government institutions, and local partners. As is often the case with field-based organisations working across distant geographies, the two units have operated with a considerable degree of independence from one another, each developing its own rhythms of work, its own relationships with local stakeholders, and its own accumulated experience of what the work demands.

To bring both units on the same plane, and to give them a collective breather, Sam-Haq Trust organises a retreat-cum-planning meet each year, held at a location away from both units' bases. Such an occasion allows the teams to reflect together on the values, relationships, and habits of work that have come to define the organisation, and to consider these questions away from the pressures of day-to-day fieldwork.

It was in this spirit that the Trust gathered the Delhi and Mumbai units at Bhedaghat, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh from 12 to 14 July 2026. Over three days, the retreat brought together members of both units for a structured period of reflection and collective engagement with questions of leadership and culture, marking a deliberate pause at the close of two years of the inception of the organisation.

This report presents a session-wise account of the proceedings that followed and the key reflections that emerged over the course of the three days.

RATIONALE

Sam-Haq Trust's field programmes are, by design, decentralised. The Delhi and Mumbai units each work closely with the populations and local institutions specific to their own contexts, and this proximity to the ground is part of what makes the work effective. But it also means that there is also the risk of the two units drifting apart and developing different working cultures, different unstated assumptions about what the organisation stands for, and progressively less shared understanding of one another's work.

The planning and review meets combined with a retreat exist to counter this drifting apart. Bringing both units physically away from their usual locations, and away from the pressures of ongoing work, creates a space in which teams can discuss the year's work, discuss difficulties that day-to-day pace does not leave room to discuss, and revisit the values and practices meant to hold the organisation together across its units.

Staying and working for half a day at SIRD Jabalpur was also chosen deliberately. As one of Sam-Haq Trust's key institutional supporters, engaging with SIRD directly

during the retreat offered an opportunity to deepen that relationship, rather than treating the venue as incidental to the retreat's purpose.

OBJECTIVE

The retreat was designed to bring the Delhi and Mumbai units together, giving both teams a collective breather from the pace of ongoing work, in a setting away from their usual locations. Beyond this, it sought to create space for the two units to reflect together, as a single organisation rather than as separate teams, on the values, relationships, and systems of work that define Sam-Haq Trust, and to critically examine leadership practice within the organisation, as well as to understand and evaluate each other and give formal feedback, so as to bring the stated values into everyday practice.

SESSIONS

The retreat was organised across four sessions held over three days, each with its own focus, as detailed below.

Session 1: Reflecting on Our Journey and Understanding the Role of SIRD, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

The retreat began on 12 July 2026 at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayatraj, Jabalpur (hereinafter referred to as SIRD), with the first session starting at 11:00 AM.

The session began with a reflection on the work carried out by our teams over the past two years. Mr. Nilesh Kamble presented the journey of the Delhi unit, sharing the major activities undertaken, key learnings, and the challenges faced during implementation. The discussion that followed created space for the team members to openly reflect on their experiences, exchange ideas, and learn from one another.

This was followed by a presentation from Ms. Aaliya Rakiba, who shared the work of the Mumbai unit. She highlighted the unit's active programmes, important milestones, and the various initiatives implemented over the last two years. The presentation gave everyone an opportunity to understand the progress made by the Mumbai team.

The session concluded with an institutional orientation by Dr Sanjay Kumar Rajput, faculty member from SIRD. He introduced the team to the history and evolution of the SIRD, its role in strengthening rural governance, and the various capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the institute. His session highlighted SIRD's mandate and its contribution to promoting effective governance and sustainable rural development.

Overall, the opening session served as a meaningful start to the retreat, bringing together reflections on our collective journey while also introducing new team members to the institution.

After this session, the team took a break for lunch and then, moved to Bhedaghat, for the rest of the stay.



Session 2: Reflecting on Our Experiences as a Team

This session was facilitated by Mr. Mohd. Tarique, and focused on reflecting upon the team's collective experiences and organisational culture.

The session began with a thought-provoking question: What is the most essential ingredient of a successful organisation? Team members were given time to think individually before sharing their reflections with the group. Each team member contributed their perspective, leading to a thoughtful discussion on the values and practices that help an organisation grow and thrive.

The conversation then moved into a series of guided reflection questions. In the first exercise, every member of the team was asked to reflect on what has motivated them to remain with the organisation and what continues to give them a sense of purpose and belonging. Team members shared different reasons, ranging from meaningful relationships with colleagues to opportunities for learning, personal growth, and the impact of our work.

The second question focused on positive memories associated with the organisation. Participants shared moments of achievement, collaboration, learning, and experiences that made them feel connected to the team and proud of their journey.

The final question encouraged participants to openly discuss difficult experiences they had encountered during their time with the organisation. This created a safe and respectful space for honest conversations, allowing the team to acknowledge and learn from them, and reflect on ways to strengthen the organisation together.

The session witnessed active participation from everyone and encouraged open dialogue, self-reflection, and a deeper understanding of one another's experiences. By the end of the discussion, the team had not only reflected on their individual journeys but also reaffirmed the shared values and relationships that continue to shape the organisation's culture.

Session 3: Aspects of Leadership

The third session took place on 13 July and focused on the Aspects of Leadership, facilitated by Mr. Mohd. Tarique. Its objective was to encourage the team to critically evaluate the leadership practices of both first-line and second-line leadership, while also reflecting on their own values and understanding the importance of translating principles into action.

The session began with an individual assessment exercise. Each participant was provided with a questionnaire containing various leadership themes and was asked to rate each aspect on a scale of 0 to 10 based on their observations and experiences. This exercise enabled participants to evaluate different dimensions of leadership in a structured manner. Following the assessment, an open discussion was conducted where participants shared their ratings and the reasoning behind them. The conversation covered both first-line and second-line leadership, allowing team members to openly express their perspectives, observations, and concerns. To further reinforce the learning, the facilitator conducted a practical exercise in which he intentionally spoke to Mr. Asif Iqbal in a critical manner. After the exercise, he clarified that it was a planned activity designed to observe the team's response as to how it supports or leaves alone its leadership in a challenging situation. The activity revealed gaps in team cohesion and the willingness of members to stand up for one another. The facilitator emphasised that values such as respect, dignity, and mutual support become meaningful only when they are consistently reflected through actions, particularly during challenging situations. Participants were encouraged to align their behaviours with the values they advocate and to actively contribute towards building a culture of trust, accountability, and solidarity.

The session concluded with a collective reflection on ethical leadership, reinforcing the importance of practising organisational values, supporting colleagues, and nurturing a collaborative and respectful work environment.



Session 4: Closure Session and Reflections on the Retreat

The final session of the retreat was held on 14 July 2026 as a closure and reflection session. This session was facilitated by Ms. Pallavi Thakare. Team members spoke about the sessions that had been most meaningful to them. Participants shared how the retreat had helped them better understand one another, appreciate the organisation's shared values, and reflect on their own roles within the team. The session also created space for participants to express gratitude for the openness, honesty, and trust that had shaped the retreat. Some members reflected on how the retreat had strengthened their sense of belonging and renewed their commitment to collective work, mutual support, and organisational growth.

The closure session ended with a shared understanding that the retreat had not only offered learning and reflection, but had also deepened relationships across the team.



KEY OUTCOMES

The retreat and its reflective sessions brought to the fore, in the team's own words, what has sustained their commitment to the organisation, the positive memories that have shaped their sense of belonging, and, in equal measure, the difficulties encountered along the way. This combination of appreciation and honest difficulty gave the retreat a depth that an only-activity-focused review would, perhaps, not have achieved.

The session on leadership was the most consequential of the three days. The facilitator's practical exercise with Mr. Asif exposed, in a manner the team could not simply discuss in the abstract, a gap in team cohesion and in members' willingness to stand up for one another. This is not a comfortable finding to write in a report, but it is perhaps the retreat's most useful outcome, since it names a concrete area, that is, team cohesion under pressure, that the team can now work on deliberately, rather than assume that it is already in place.

CONCLUSION

Over three days in Jabalpur, the retreat did what it set out to do: it gave two units that ordinarily work apart, a genuine occasion to come together, take stock, and speak honestly about the state of the organisation. It helped bring the fuller picture into view, not only two units functioning separately under the umbrella of Sam-Haq: the shared motivations, the unresolved difficulties, and the gaps in cohesion that day-to-day work rarely leaves room to confront.

ANNEXE: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Mohd. Tarique
Asif Iqbal
Pallavi Thakare
Shekhar Thapa
Shashikant Bhalerao
Nilesh Kamble
Prashik Tayde
Aaliya Rakiba
Aashish Suvarna
M. Shahid Afroz
Neetu Kumari