

# PACS Partners Bharat Nirman Campaign, Kanker (Chhatisgarh)



May 21-25, 2007

# Bharat Nirman Abhiyan Kanker, March 21-25, 2007



PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh, 2007

The Bharat Nirman Abhiyan (BNA) at Kanker, some 140 kilometers from the Chhattisgarh state capital Raipur was inaugurated at the hand of leader of opposition in the state assembly Mahendra Karma on March 21 afternoon. Besides Karma the programme was also attended by several legislators in the state assembly including Devlal Dugga, Aghansingh Thakur etc.. The center director, Doordarshan Kendra, Raipur Baikuntha Pani-grahi, the district collector Mr. Dhananjay and others were also present on the occasion.

After inaugurating the five-day long programme, Karma said the basic objective of BNA was to let people know the developmental initiatives taken by the UPA government at the center for the benefit of the people.

He said the government has taken several proactive steps during the last three years to bring about a visible change in the lives of poor people in the country and added that the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and Right to Information (RTI) are the most important interventions of the government. Karma said it was for the first time that any government at the center thought about making 'right to work' as a constitutional right and enacted the law that ensures 100 days work to the people.

Besides, he added, another important government intervention after 56 years of independence was the enactment of 'RTI' act and said this act gives ample scope to the people to get information on various projects. Karma felt that these two provisions have the potential to make a sea change in the lives of people, if implemented in right spirit.



It is in this context that he appreciated the arrangement of BNA through which people are provided with information on government schemes and provisions for common men. He also appealed the general public to collect more information about these schemes and use them for their benefit.

He even called upon the villagers to apply for work under NREGA when they need them and added that the central government has provided enough funds to the states for this project. On NREGA implementation in Chhattisgarh Karma said it was yet to get momentum to benefit large number of people. Keeping this in view he asked various agencies, NGOs and media to spread information about the scheme amongst the targeted PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh, 2007

masses so that the true objective of this could be realized.

Prior to speaking on the occasion, Baikuntha Panigrahi spoke about the objective behind the campaign and said it was basically aimed at reaching the people to let them know the initiatives taken by the government for their benefit. He said the first such campaign in the state at Dhamtari in October 2006 got good response from all quarters and large number of people visited the campaign venue. He said the campaign helps in disseminating information to the wider segment of the general public and hoped that the campaign at Kanker would also be successful in achieving its goal.

The Kanker MLA, Devlal Dugga, was the chief guest on the concluding day ceremony of BNA. Dugga in his speech appreciated the arrangement made by the PIB for creating awareness about various government schemes through the BNA and hoped that more such camps in rural areas would help the people.

## PACS in BNA

This time, there are two stalls of PACS partner at BNA venue at Kanker. As PACS partners reached the venue with huge stocks of display materials, the organizers had to give an additional stall to PACS at the venue.

In fact, the organizers were happy to see the quality of materials displayed at these stalls.



On first day, representatives of Lokshakti Samajsevi Sansthan (LSS), Rajnandgaon and Baiga Mahapanchayat, Kanker were present at the two stalls. The stalls were full with materials displaying the basic informations about RTI, NREGA and other government- sponsored schemes for poverty alleviation. Besides, for better understanding of rural masses on Panchayatiraj, Gram Sabha etc., graphical and pictorial representations were also displayed there, which caught the attention of all the visitors. After the formal inauguration, large number of people visited the stalls in the evening.

Members of LSS, Jagriti Seva Sansthan and Baiga Mahapanchayat who were present at the PACS stall during the five PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh, 2007

day event, took training on women and child welfare and on better sanitation. They were also the part of the on-going programmes organized by the Department of Audio-Visual Publicity (DAVP), Govt. of India. Besides, they also participated in group discussions like Panchayati Raj and NREGS organized at the venue.

Three participants each from JSS, LSS, Baiga Mahapanchayat and Margdarshak Seva Sansthan (MSS) were also present at the BNA venue since beginning. These three participants represented the people who had got training on various media in the Integrated Media Training (IMT) at Raipur in June 2006. The objective behind inviting these people was to expose them to an event where they could use their skills like photography, radio programming, comics etc..

While the Kanker headquartered Baiga Mahapanchayat participated in the campaign all the day with a separate stall at their disposal, LSS participants were present on the first and third day to make their presentation and take part in various events and group discussions at the venue, JSS members were present on second day. On the fourth day, it was Baiga Mahapanchayat that stole the show.

More than 80 members of these organizations thronged to the venue to take part in the workshop on Sochna Ki Adhikar (RTI). As the chief information commissioner (CIC) A.K.Vijayvargiya and other speakers spoke about the basic things about RTI and its implementation, these simple looking villagers, most of them being tribal, started questioning the CIC on how they could get information from the officers, what if they are not pro-



# Half-Day Workshop on Right to Information (RTI)

*Organisers:* PACS & Press Information Bureau (PIB), Chhattisgarh

*Venue:* Bharat Nirman Abhiyan, Kanker

*Date:* March 24, 2007.

vided with information, whether they could ask information on programmes like Indira Awas Yojana, Sampoorna Gramin Swastha Yojana, Rojgar Guaranttee Yojana, Antyodaya Yojana etc.. They even ask the CIC to take steps in providing more information about the 'Soचना Ki Adhikar.' About half of the participants constituted women.

The women and child welfare department that was organizing training programmes at the BNA venue also imparted training on the same subject to the people who have reached early to participate in the venue.

The half-day long workshop on Right to Information (RTI) arranged on the penultimate day of the Bharat Nirman Abhiyan (BNA) on March 24 at Kanker was a big success.

Jointly organized by Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme and Press Information Bureau (PIB), the Government of India-arm that also co-ordinated the BNA, had the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), Chhattisgarh, A.K.Vijayvargiya as the chief guest.

Speakers on the occasion includes Srinivas Rao, Chhattisgarh state chief, PRIA, center Director, All India Radio, Ms. Geeta Markam, and district collector, Kanker, Mr.G.S. Dhanan-



jay. Eighty eight (88) villagers from different parts of Kanker district gathered at the venue to take part in the workshop. They were led by Ms. Rashmi Dwivedi and Mr. Nath of Baiga Mahapanchayat, a PACS partner.

Speaking on the occasion, the CIC stressed on voluntary disclosure of information by government departments. He further added that a person seeking information will have to pay a maximum of Rs.Two per every page of information.

He called upon the people as well as civil society organizations to bring matters related to higher charges and denial of information by any government body, to his notice so that appropriate action could be taken against them. It is to be noted

PACS Madhya Pradesh & Chhatisgarh, 2007

here that the state government had made some amendment in the law under which there was a provision of charging Rs.100 per every page of information that required additional staff and effort to prepare.

However, the CIC informed that the amendment has subsequently been withdrawn and now every page of information would cost a maximum of Rs.Two.

The CIC also called upon the civil society organizations (CSOs) to spread information about the RTI extensively amongst the general public so that they could use the medium effectively for getting information for their own benefit as well as benefit of the common men.

With the officials of PIB, All India Radio, Doordarshan, state public relation department as well as media present at the workshop, Vijayvargiya stressed that the mass media should take a proactive approach in spreading information about RTI. He even called upon the All India Radio and Doordarshan to prepare programmes on RTI on local dialects so that people could understand the provision easily.

When Rashmi Dwivedi informed the CIC that people are denied information by the officials in blocks viz. Pandariya, Kawardha, Rajanandgaon etc., despite fulfilling all necessary criteria, Vijayvargiya asked her to give him a written complaint so that he could summon all these officials to his office and ask them to explain the reasons for non-sharing of information. She further informed that there has been demand for Rs.100 per every page of information by these officials to which the CIC said he would look into the matter.



As a participant suggested to the CIC to write to the state government to include discussion on RTI as an agenda in Gram Sabha meetings, the CIC appreciated the suggestion and

assured that his office would do the needful in this regard. On a question from Mr. Nath, Vijayvargiya said even NGOs come under RTI if they receive more than Rs. Two lakhs from state government or 25 percent of their revenue comes from the state government projects.

Shrinivas while initiating the workshop proceedings spoke about various provisions of RTI that could help the general public. He also spoke about the technicalities involved in applying for RTI seeking informations.

He also called upon the participants to get information on various developmental projects like NREGA, Food for Work, poverty eradication programmes, road and pond works etc.. so that they know exactly what is being spent by the government for their development.

To a query from a journalist the district collector Dhana-jay said all information relating to RTI were already sent to the all the concerned department and added that the provisions of RTI have been adhered to in the district by all means. The district Superintendent of Police Mr. Chaubey also spoke about the steps taken by the police department for providing information under RTI and said baring security related matters all other informations can be given under RTI.

Later the center director, AIR, Raipur, Ms. Markam said AIR would take necessary step in preparing programmes on RTI in local dialects as was being suggested by the CIC so that it could help the general public understand the provisions of RTI.