

District-level Meeting of Civil Society Organizations and Media: Networking For The Poor

Regional Rural Development Training Centre RRDTTC, Nowgong

May 4 - 5, 2007



In continuation of the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) - State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) - Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme initiative, a '**District Level Meeting Of Civil Society Organizations And Media: Networking For The Poor**' was held at the Regional Rural Development Training Centre, Nowgong, in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh on May 4 and 5, 2007.

The two-day training programme was designed to facilitate and promote advocacy on issues of the poorest. Since community is the beneficiary of government schemes, civil society organizations play an important role of a watchdog to ensure proper implementation of Government schemes.

As part of civil society the media too has a role to play in ensuring proper implementation of Government programme. Only this can help build capacity of community and increase their participation in the proper implementation of government schemes.

FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

The first day's proceedings began at the Regional Rural Development Training Centre (RRDTC), Nowgong with its Principal BS Chauhan inaugurating the workshop with a prayer. Training facilitator SK Tiwari began the session asking participants to give their introduction.

PACS State Based Communications Agency (SBCA), Write Solutions' Jinendra Singh spoke about

the objective of the workshop, which had been specially organized by PACS programme to support its ongoing advocacy initiatives on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), Right to Information (RTI), Right to Food (RTF), the Public Distribution System (PDS) and Social Audit issues at the grassroots level.

Regional Rural Development Training Centre



senior faculty RP Khare in his presentation on the NREGA's detailed the salient features of the scheme. He also distinguished this scheme vis a vis other Government schemes. He gave details about the differences between NREGA and other government schemes which have been implemented before by the Union and State Governments; the new amendment under and for the NREGA;

limitations, leverage, eligibility and bi-laws, norms of the scheme and the role of governments concerned, community, CSOs for the linking with schemes.

Amongst the PACS CSOs present there, IN-DCARE, Mahila Jagriti Manch, Chhatapur, VAMA, Vidisha, Ekta Parishad, ASA, Chhatarpur, Darshana Mahila Kalyan Samiti, Mahila Samiti the queries and observations raised after RP Khare's presentation were:

- There was a need to create more awareness on the right to information (RTI) among communities

and at the grassroots level.

- There should be more publicity, propaganda, awareness about Government schemes.
- PRIs should not be the only concerned body at the village level. There is a need for more decentralization and institutions involvement.
- There is an urgent need to use RTI, social audit to get proper information from concerned bodies.

A film on the **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangh's** (MKSS) struggle on the **Right to Information** and their work on social audit was screened for the trainees. The film dwelt on the right of the Indian public to take advantage of government schemes with the help of RTI.

The participants agreed that such an initiative could happen in Madhya Pradesh too, if community was mobilized.

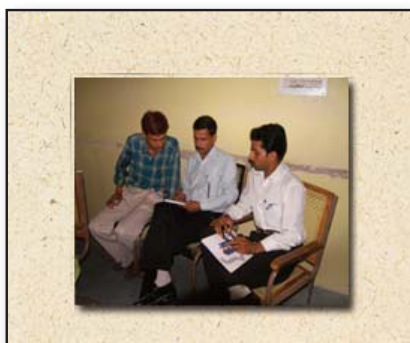
After these presentations, among the CSO's, journalist and government officials two groups were formed to discuss the demand and supply aspects of the NREGA

Group presentations

Group-1 consisting of CSO's

- People do not know the salient features of the NREGA
- There is a bias in providing employment, people in villages have been charged for making job cards and for the photographs to be attached in the job card, there is lack of awareness about the procedure for applying for work under the NREGA, process are complicated and there are several hurdles in the NREGA.

- Job cards are being cornered and kept by the village sarpanch and secretary.
- People do not get receipt of the application
- There is lack of proper documentation process, transparency.



- It is an unwritten law that work goes only to people who can influence local politics.

- There is lack of proper facilities at the work site like crèches, medicare, insurance or provision of shade.



- Timely and correct payments are not made.

- In some work sites children have been employed.

employed.

- Although there is three per cent reservation for the disabled, no disabled person is given work under the NREGA.

Group-2 consisting of Government Officials

- There is a lot of burden trying to implement Government schemes because they are target-oriented and officials are not able to give proper attention to one particular scheme.

- For example in the forest department there is a lot of scope to provide employment for more than 100 days but the limit is creating a hurdle.

- Government officials can not provide work on the basis of task but they can provide work on the basis of job rate.

- Normally people avoid work in forest areas.

Summing up the day's proceedings, RP Khare and SK Tiwari emphasized to the CSO's that scams in Government schemes could be decreased by increasing proper and efficient communication from top to bottom. Only this will help sort out problems and prepare the ground for proper accomplishment of the NREGA and policy level advocacy.

SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

The second day's proceedings began with a recap of the previous day's discussions. Following this, the use of community radio and social audit in ensuring proper implementation of Government schemes were introduced for discussion.

The PACS State-based Communication Agency, Write Solutions, gave a presentation about community radio and its importance in the development process. Write Solutions briefed the participants about the training that had been provided for PACS CSOs on community radio, internet for advocacy. The participants were then divided into two groups and were told to develop scripts for community radio.

In the discussions that took place, it was decided that one group would prepare a radio programme on the NREGA, while ASA-PACS partners would prepare a programme on their Seed Awareness Campaign. While the participants prepared their script, AIR-DD correspondent from Satna, Lal Bhaduri Tiwari helped the participants polish their scripts. He reiterated that radio programmes should be able to grab the attention of the listeners and that

the script writers should use minimum words to get maximum message across. He also helped the participants structure their scripts.

In the NREGA community radio story, the group identified:

- Village sarpanch who was implementing the NREGA.
- Government officials opinion and process introduction of the NREGA
- CSO's voice as facilitator
- Beneficiaries speaking about benefits and obstacles of the scheme

The second group developed the community radio programme on the seed bank issue and based the script on:

- The drought in Bundelkhan & how farmers were coping with distress
- The salient features of the Seed Awareness campaign
- How farmers were making baby and mother seed trials
- How women were made major stakeholders
- What are the benefits of the scheme.

As part of the two-day training, local journalists were also invited to the programme. DD Abdul Rafique was impressed by the



way the CSOs were recording their programmes and decided to film the proceedings for a programme for Doordarshan.

During an interaction between the media and the CSOs, both sides put forward their issues. The media participants said that they were always in search of good stories and the CSOs said that they needed the support of the media. Among the local journalists who were present on the occasion were Deepak Khare, Devendra Singh, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Rajesh Tiwari, Abdul Rasheed Khan, Rashmi Tiwari, and Sunil Kumar Pandey.

The discussion between the media fraternity and CSO then chalked out a strategy that this group would take up issues of Bundelkhand in a more comprehensive manner.

ETC trainer SK Tiwari took a session on **Social Audit**. He explained that the social audit process was very important for transparency in community level work. He clarified for the CSOs present that any community could raise the question for social audit. In addition to this he said that community could ask for detail progress of the activity including financial transaction, estimate participation etc.

SK Tiwari summed up the discussions over the past two days. He and Jinendra Singh from Write Solutions stressed that there was a need to set up an advocacy system which would raise issues from the grassroots. They emphasized that this two day meeting was only an exercise in capacity-building for CSOs and in the future the CSOs could be a trainer of trainers for communities in the concern area.

ETC Principal BS Chauhan distributed the certificate of participation to all the trainees and proposed the vote of thanks.

