

Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme
Peer Review Workshop, Lucknow, UP
6th – 7th August 2003

Background

With the aim of supporting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in assisting people in the poorest and most backward districts of India to realize their entitlements more effectively and sustainably, the Development Alternatives- Price Waterhouse Coopers consortia are implementing the Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) programme with support from the British Governments Department for International Development (DFID).

DFID's development assistance programme in India is entirely targeted on poverty reduction and is delivered in partnership with selected state government and the national government. This approach, by definition still excludes a large number of poor people who need to be included in order for India to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015. With this objective, DFID's India country strategy envisages working with civil society in most of the hundred poorest districts of India as defined by the government of India.

The main beneficiaries will be the poor people in the poorest and most backward districts of India, particularly women. A large cross section of civil society organisations working at community and national level will also be benefited from this programme.

The following **thematic areas** have been identified for support in the initial years, which will contribute to increasing access to entitlements.

- Responsive local self-governance in rural and urban areas to promote articulation of the needs of the poor and access to information about entitlements.
- Women's empowerment to make them effective participants in governance.
- Social cohesion focusing on efforts at raising awareness on entitlements, changes in institutions, discrimination and manage conflicts of interest towards accelerated poverty reduction.
- Policy advocacy in order to break the patterns of public inertia on critical areas affecting the poor like tribal rights dowry violence, environmental degradation, etc.

- Self-help to meet the immediate basic needs of the poor (in specified circumstances) capacity of it would provide a platform for developing the longer-term approaches mentioned above.

Purpose of the workshop

The Peer Review Workshop for the state of Uttar Pradesh was organised mainly to bring all the PACS partners together for collective sharing and learning through exchange of information and experiences. This, it was thought, would help in identifying appropriate capacity building measures, review of potential risks in project implementation, convergence with government programmes and identifying common issues for undertaking advocacy at the state level for the rights and entitlements of the poor. This would further help the programme in establishing mechanism for effective transparency and building synergy between the PACS partners.

Proceedings

Opening Session

Welcoming the participants, the Management Consultants briefly put forth the broad overview and rationale of the PACS programme, the strategy that has been adopted at the national level for implementation of the programme and the geographic coverage of the programme. This was followed by the presentation of the geographical coverage of the programme in the state of Uttar Pradesh and the present status in terms of the projects that have been received and sanctioned. It was revealed by the Management Consultants that as on July 30, 2003 there are 18 projects covering 51 development blocks of these 18 districts. The themes that these projects are addressing are:

- Policy Advocacy
- Women Empowerment
- Self Help
- Local Self – Governance and;
- Social Cohesion

It was also presented before the participants that the total value of the projects amounts to INR 1237.68 lakhs.

Inviting the government officials and the representatives from Donor Organisations to share their thoughts and express their views and experiences followed this.

Deliberations by Government Officials and Donors: The GO – NGO Linkage

Mr. C.P. Arun, Additional Commissioner, Department of Rural Development, Government of UP, felt that PACS is a systematized project for bettering the lot of the poor people. Therefore, the importance of NGOs in this endeavour cannot be undermined. The NGOs must decide on their area of operation, develop a micro plan and approach the government. The government will ensure convergence. He was of the view that the government wants to involve the NGOs in their programme and the NGOs are welcome to partake of support from the government in any manner they may require.

Mr. Sudhan Chandra Chandola, Deputy Director, Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh said that NGOs have been acknowledged as partners of the government, and a start has already been made through the Masters Training organised some time back. He felt that there were a number of good NGOs and there is a need to develop mutual trust between these two most important actors engaged in the process of social change. He was of the view that it was the government's responsibility to identify good NGOs with whom they can work. In fact, the government sector, the NGO sector, and the Panchayat sector should work together. In local government, it is only the NGOs who can strengthen the capacities and skills of the elected representatives and the standing committees.

Ms. Manju Agarwal of Mahila Samakhya, Uttar Pradesh, felt that it was extremely difficult to work with the government. Once you get to know each other, establish good relations and start thinking of doing something together, the official is transferred, so you have to start the same process all over again with the new official and this process goes on and on. She also said that not only was there a tremendous lack of information but also access to information. Therefore, the NGOs and government must interact more frequently to develop institutional mechanisms for regular inflow of information.

Ms. Amita Jain of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was of the opinion that since NGOs are more flexible, the government can forge useful partnership with them. However, the government has to change its attitude to further strengthen its relationship with the NGOs. At the same time, the NGOs too should change their attitude towards the government by considering them partners in development.

Ms. Mridula Sharma of UNICEF supported Ms. Jain's views and said that there was no demand from the community because they did not have any information. Reacting

information to them is a must and should form a part of our capacity building initiatives. "Our duty is also our responsibility."

Mr. Lalchand Garg of OXFAM (India) Trust said that since PACS was a rights based programme, a different perspective and approach was required. Mechanisms to enable the community to raise their demands at the higher levels need to be developed. Besides, he also made a request to share and work with PACS.

Ms. Savitri Sharma of Find Your Feet (FYF) said that the objectives of both FYF and PACS were similar. She emphasized that no donor driven project should be taken otherwise i.e. the donor as the 'giver' and the NGO as the 'receiver'. The donors too should inform the NGOs that they are prepared to provide other types of support, whenever required. Funding should not be the only support.

Ms. Shivkala Iyer of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was quite categorical that if the aim was raising the living standard of the poor, than all the activities should be in congruence with each other. The NGOs activities should not be project based. They should work on issues.

Summarising, **Ms. Kiran Sharma**, Programme Manager of PACS programme said that the workshop was an effort at synergy building. This was a platform in which so many experts could be brought together. She described this workshop as a platform for different partners of the PACS Programme in Uttar Pradesh to come together to share their views, ideas and experiences. It was also stressed upon that the time has come when the self and peer monitoring system should start emerging and gradually be in place and cross learning becomes an integral part of the programme. It was emphasised that we as programme partners should also reveal our weaknesses and shortcomings and openly discuss them so that solutions to these are found. Revealing the uniqueness of PACS programme, the Management Consultants said that this is a relatively more flexible programme and mid-course corrections during the implementation of the projects can be facilitated. Discussing the concept of the peer review workshop the Management Consultants said that the workshop is an opportunity to change the project design of required. This is also an opportunity to have a re-look. But at the same time, Ms. Kiran Sharma stressed upon the fact that we need to be very careful in the area of financial management of the project and utmost care should be taken by us to see that books of accounts are properly and regularly maintained. The partner organisations are expected to provide requisite co-operation and support whenever financial monitoring takes place and it was also informed that this would be a regular activity during the cycle of the project. Since, Development Alternatives (DA) has taken the responsibility of changing the image of the voluntary sector, such a platform

for sharing experiences and concerns are very important. It is also a learning experience for DA too, so that they may undertake corrective measure if required.

Thereafter, selected partner NGOs were invited to make their presentations.

CSO Presentations

Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS) Chitrakoot

ABSSS is working with six partners in the Bundelkhand region (Southern UP) of the state. The *major problems of Bundelkhand* as experienced by ABSSS, in their operational area were listed out as follows:

- The target groups viz. *dalits* and *adivasis* have no entitlement rights.
- While the *dalits* are notified as STs, the *Adivasis* are notified as SCs.
- Child and bonded labour still exists in the area.
- There is still rampant exploitation by moneylenders, revenue officials and forest department officials.
- Women still face a lot of discrimination
- The natural resources are inadequately used
- The Panchayati Raj system has not been able to perform as expected.
- Government schemes hardly ever reach to those who need it most.

The needs as identified in the process are

- To ensure provision of entitlements, especially land
- To reduce social and economic exploitation
- To strengthen local self governance.
- To develop leadership among women and *dalits*
- To lobby with the government to notify the *adivasis* as STs.
- To lobby for shaping a separate policy for Bundelkhand and raise the issues at the national and international level.

Expressing the learning derived at the level of ABSSS and its partners it was revealed that the community based organisations (CBOs), the government and other actors of Civil Society will have to come together to tackle the issues. The team members of ABSSS during their presentation emphasised that their future plan will concentrate upon strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), women empowerment and policy advocacy.

Replying to the queries raised by the participants, ABSSS explained that various tools – questionnaire survey, house-to-house survey and secondary data from the block office – were used to complete the survey. Further it was also explained to the participants that undulating topography of the region has prevented them from reaching out to remoter areas of Bundelkhand and making information available to each of the members of the target group in such a short span of time. These and many other factors necessitate that a separate policy for development of Bundelkhand Region be developed and this would form one of the most important areas of policy advocacy in future by ABSSS and its partners.

Margshree Charitable Trust (MCT), Jhansi

Based in the heartland of Bundelkhand, the issues, topography, etc. are more or less similar to those being faced by ABSSS viz. extreme poverty, continuous drought stricken, food insecurity, unsafe drinking water, existence of child and bonded labour, illiteracy, poor health and lack of health facilities, migration, exploitation of the deprived classes and women, etc.

The **objectives** they had decided upon for PACS programme, which began in July, 2002, were:

- Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural areas of Southern UP for effective implementation of rural development and poverty alleviation schemes.
- Capacity building of elected and appointed officials of PRIs so that they are able to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.
- Having an informed electorate for developing transparent and accountable local self-governance.

Elaborating the progress made during the project, MCT said that the baseline survey has been completed, training and refresher training programmes have been organised, information dissemination is being carried out and, Panchayat Information Centres (PICs) have been established. Following trends that have been observed in the field were presented:

- Panchayats have been able to develop a better understanding of their rights, duties, responsibilities, rural development programmes that are currently being implemented in the region and other related issues. At the community level too, understanding of main provisions of the Panchayati Raj Act has increased.
- Women are gradually coming out and have started participating actively in programmes and meetings. This trend is specifically visible in the ward level meetings that are being

organised. But at the same time more efforts need to be made to further enhance the participation of women.

- Similar trends have also been observed with respect to participation of youth and marginalised sections of the community.
- Regular information dissemination through various means and follow-up meetings with the community has resulted in building of peer pressure groups at the Gram Sabha level.
- PICs have been of help in making availability of information at the local level on a regular and on-time basis. Increasing number of visitors and increased demand of information from these PICs by GS members is quite visible.
- Successful efforts have been made to engage and involve other stakeholders and actors such as CSOs, media and government in the programme. Good coverage by media and support from government officials have been quite encouraging.
- Efforts have also been taken by community in the areas of effective utilisation of locally available resources and technical know-how managing PICs, constituting peer pressure groups, publishing news bulletin and alike.
- MCT besides planned activities has also taken several initiatives such as documentation of success stories, publication of quarterly bulletin, developing an information resource bank named *Panchayat Pitara* and making it available to the community, developing Village Communication Teams, involving children in the intervention and providing identity cards to PIC organisers.

The constraints as observed during the process of intervention were put forth as follows:

- Undulating topography and remote areas of intervention
- Local level power dynamics and socio-cultural taboos and norms
- Unwanted interference of politicians
- Lack of requisite seriousness and sensitivity among bureaucrats
- Very limited income generation opportunities at the local level leading to migration

At the same time MCT admitted that there are many opportunities that existed. Some of these are:

- Local level leadership development
- Initiatives by the community
- Locally available skills, resources and technical know-how

Answering the queries raised by participants related to measures taken for enhancing participation of females, it was replied that their queries and voices were put forth before the elected representatives and the women were informed of the actions taken by the representatives on the same. This helped a great deal in increasing the confidence of women and bridging the gap between the two. Gradually women have started coming out and participating actively in the meeting. For increasing the participation of the elected members in the meetings, they were encouraged to participate in the ward and community level meetings and the focus was on bridging the gap between the elected and the electorate. As regards enhancing transparency, it was explained by the MCT that efforts are being made to strengthen the PRIs so that they can develop their own plans, discuss budget allocation and implement the plans. Once this happens, it is expected that this will have a positive effect on migration, increase transparency and control corruption.

Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK), Lucknow

Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK) works with 10 partners in 10 development blocks of 9 districts of the state. The needs as identified by the organisation and its partners were listed as under:

- Having an aware and informed gram sabha – the base of transparent and accountable local self - governance.
- Optimal use of local resources
- Facilitating local level decentralised planning process
- Easing availability of and access to information of different stakeholders in general and those of elected representatives in particular
- Capacity building of elected and appointed officials of panchayats
- Accountability of elected and appointed officials towards gram sabha
- Availability of skilled human resources at the local level

The *objectives* of the programme are as under:

- Capacity Building of elected and appointed officials at Gram Panchayat level for effective and efficient discharge of their duties.
- Enabling Gram Sabha members in general and women and those belonging to weaker sections of the society in particular to play an active role in the decision making process.
- Promoting planned local people centred development at the Gram Panchayat level.

- Developing and strengthening linkages among related institutions, individuals and other CSOs for advocacy.
- Making trained human resources available at the local level through capacity building of partner organisations.

It was also conveyed to the participants that SSK also functions as the State Resource Centre on local self - governance, and works through 8 District Resources Centres. At the local level, the following inputs are being provided in the programme:

- Training and refresher training programmes for elected and appointed officials of gram panchayats
- Publication and dissemination of information dissemination material and wall writing
- Establishment and strengthening of Panchayat Information Centres
- Regular meetings with gram sabha and gram panchayat members
- Meetings and workshops at block and district level
- Facilitating local level micro-planning process
- Developing relationships and linkages with different actors
- Collection, collation, compilation and dissemination of information
- Monthly review meetings at the partners level
- Selection and capacity building of citizen leaders

The state level inputs as presented by SSK are as under:

- Capacity building training programmes and other efforts for partner organisations on a regular basis
- Regular support to partners in the areas of programme management, programme delivery and organisation management and development
- On – site support to partners through field visits
- Publication of quarterly bulletin and other information dissemination and reference material
- Three day quarterly review meeting at the state level
- Developing and strengthening linkages at the state and sub-state levels

The visible *outputs* are as follows:

- 115 training programmes have been organised for elected and appointed officials of gram panchayats in which 6224 persons participated of which 75 per cent were males and 25 per cent females. Similarly, 181 refresher training programmes were organised for the same target group in which 8166 persons participated of which 66 per cent were males and 34 per cent females.
- Elected and appointed officials of gram panchayats and members of gram sabha have started demanding latest information on various aspects
- Successful efforts have been made to regularise gram panchayat meetings in 5 per cent of the intensive gram panchayats
- Clarity has gradually been developed among elected officials of gram panchayats regarding their roles
- Appointed officials of gram panchayats have gradually started asking support for upkeep and management of records of gram panchayats
- Gradually clarity of roles is being developed among members of standing committees of gram panchayats and they have started taking initiatives on local level development issues
- Pressure groups are gradually coming into existence at the local level
- Elected members of gram panchayats have started demanding that the funds for local level development that are coming through MPLAD or MLALAD should come through gram panchayats
- Female members who were a part of the exposure group organised at the local level have taken efforts in their area to constitute self – help groups
- Bulletins and information dissemination material has been developed at the state and local level on policy and local level development aspects
- A total of 105 PICs have been established which have been visited by about 11000 people and sought information on different development issues. Subjects on which information are being kept at these PICs has gradually increased. Demands are being placed by gram sabha members under extensive coverage to establish PICs in their area
- Intervention was made in all the intensive gram panchayats in the process of formation of BPL List. Gram Sabha members too, realising the importance of the list made sincere efforts in the form of co-operation, demanding for transparency in the process, putting pressure on elected and appointed officials of gram panchayats and alike

- More than 500 meetings organised at the local level in which about 60 per cent males and 40 per cent females participated
- Block and district level workshops have helped in sensitising different actors on local level development issues and developing linkages with different actors
- Kshetra and Zilla Panchayats too have started demanding information
- In 12 gram panchayats nine local level development plans prepared and implemented. Total budget of these plans was Rs.3,60,500.00 of which 27.94 per cent was the contribution of gram panchayats, 24.13 per cent of the community and rest was the support from the programme.
- Income generation and infrastructure issues have been covered under the programme
- Efforts for orientation of CBOs on issues related to local self – governance have been made
- Field visits and training programmes coupled with other efforts for capacity building of partner organisations are being regularly made at the state level
- Partner organisations have been able to develop an identity of their own at the district and sub-district level in the area of local self - governance

The *learning* derived are:

- Separate efforts need to be made for women
- Efforts need to be made to bridge the distance between gram sabha and gram panchayat
- Concerted efforts need to be made for women and other marginalised sections of the community
- There is need to link the efforts with the local level development issues
- Care needs to be taken in establishment of PICs and selection of co-ordinator
- Sustainability of PICs needs to be thought of and built in the strategy
- Sustainability of the process of information flow from top to bottom and vice – versa
- Intensive efforts need to be made with the Kshetra Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats
- Regular efforts need to be made for capacity building of partner organisations in the areas of programme management, programme delivery and organisational development
- Horizontal and vertical linkages need to be developed with different stakeholders

- Process documentation of the efforts that are being made is important
- Keeping in view the needs of the programme and the geographical expanse of the intervention support for mobility to the partners needs to be provided by the PACS
- Functional strategy for convergence at various levels needs to be developed and implemented

Providing clarification on the queries raised, it was mentioned that the local level plans have been developed jointly by the community and the panchayats and we simply facilitated the process and the meetings at the community level were those that have been organised under the programme and not the normal Gram Sabha meetings. Participation of women in development and implementation of these local level plans was quite active and as an after effect they have started coming out and participating in the activities and started raising their concerns and issues. As regards the sustainability of PICs it was revealed that several successful efforts have been made in certain areas but there is a need to draw up a general strategy for the same.

It was remarked that the efforts made by the NGO were laudable. A start and direction has already been provided, and though not easy, they will meet with success. The NGOs need to consider and address the constraints and problems, carry out studies, and experiment on them.

It was further emphasised that PACS programme is an opportunity for the capacity building of Civil Society. The PRIs, the Government and the Civil Society should come together. Women in many cases are already empowered. They need information, motivation and encouragement.

Akhil Bharatiya Gramodaya Sewa Sansthan (ABGSS), Bahraich

Stating women empowerment as the main theme of the intervention under the PACS, ABGSS put forth that the overall target group under the intervention is the families of the scheduled castes and poor but the focus is on women and girl child in Mihinpurwa development block of Bahraich district. It was further clarified by ABGSS that it has just started its interventions under the PACS programme the main strategy is formation of SHGs. SHGs have been envisaged as the main agents of the social change. Besides income generation programmes (IGPs), the SHGs are expected to work on issues that are being faced in the area viz. illiteracy, lack of access to health facilities, alcoholism, environmental pollution, and lack of information and awareness. The SHGs will work on all the issues and address all the problems in a bid to uplift the family to a desired level. Following future strategy of the intervention was presented by ABGSS:

- The SHGs would be federated to form an umbrella organisation. The activities which are already underway will focus on:
 - o Capacity Building of staff/ participants/ community
 - o Women empowerment- social, economic, and political
 - o Strengthening PRIs
 - o Health Awareness
 - o Education

The aim is to establish

- Equitable status
- Equal economic empowerment
- Equal thought – process
- Meetings as per schedule

It is through these SHGs that the whole family will be benefited, which has been called "*Kutumb sri*". The whole idea was also presented in an umbrella form.

Replying to the queries raised by the participants it was replied that the umbrella was basically intended to highlight the envisaged development of the SHGs into a separate CBO and encompass several development initiatives besides income generation. SHGs are the focus but other activities including PRIs have also been considered and will be taken up after some time. Activities in Health Awareness and Education will be the prime activities since lack of awareness is proving to be a great bottleneck for the people in having access to these services. The programme on awareness will be targeted to the families.

Network of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (NEED) Lucknow

NEED too has focused on women empowerment in Sitapur district, adjoining Lucknow. Taking economic empowerment as a felt need, which also emerged from the survey too, SHGs have been formed and most of them have been linked to banks and in a few cases to IGPs, especially for women, has also been initiated. It was also put forth by NEED that Panchayati Raj has not been ignored. A PIC has been established and efforts are being made to organise regular meetings of the Panchayat. For Health awareness, awareness camps have been organised. In the area of education, the local literates have been motivated to provide literacy to the illiterates. Camps for young girls, education exposure tours have also been organised and convergence with government too has been established.

The above activities have been organised geared towards the problems of the area viz.

- Illiteracy
- Lack of income and employment opportunities
- Lack of awareness, information, self-dependency.
- Child marriage
- Exploitation by moneylenders.

It is for this reason that women are both, the target groups, and the agenda for social change.

Replying to the queries regarding management of PICs NEED replied that the target groups had on their own rented a room in the village, which served as a PIC. It was managed by the target groups themselves and was for all, not just the PRIs. Commenting on the experience of the SHGs formed under SWASHAKTI Project NEED was of the view that most of the SHGs formed under the project are closing down because the workers have not been paid their salaries for as many as 9 months. But the 100 SHGs that NEED had formed are still running as this part has been taken care of by the organisation. Further it was also clarified by NEED that requisite care has been taken up to have different areas of intervention under different projects. The area of intervention under NABARD programme is different than that of PACS. It was also admitted that the meetings with elected members of panchayats and the electorate have proved to be quite useful for us and for the people and the process would be carried on forward.

Commenting on the situation of PRIs, some of the participants were of the view that much more needs to be done in the area of strengthening these local governments. Others were of the view that efforts in the area of strengthening PRIs need to be coupled with those of self-employment and income generation so that some dent can be made on poverty.

Commenting on the above Ms. Kiran Sharma, Programme Manager (PACS) said that the aim of PACS is not to remove poverty. Rather, it is mainly meant to increase one's capacity so that they can undertake such initiatives, which help in reducing poverty in their area. The whole programme is to strengthen the Civil Society and ultimately enable the poor to reduce their poverty.

Supportive Supervision

Mr. Avaneesh Kumar from the Management Consultants presenting the concept of supportive supervision said that the whole idea behind this is to achieve more efficiency and

effectiveness in the PACS programme. Explaining the idea of the same he said that it included providing support to the partners involved in the programme, initiating the process of institutionalisation of learning in the organisations involved, developing requisite management information systems so that information flows become more regular and effective and identifying capacity building needs of the partner organisations. He put forth following reasons for supportive supervision:

- It gets PACS closer to the field
- State resource agencies can bring in knowledge and grassroots perspective
- Greater inputs to the overall programme possible
- Stronger linkages between PACS and partner and finally
- Better management of the programme

What are the traits of an SSRO

- Positive approach
- Flexible
- Non- intrusive
- Friendly
- Listener
- Strict

Roles of a SSRO

- Desk appraisal
- Orientation workshop (immediately after contract is signed)
 - Clarity on objectives and vision
 - Assimilating partners in the process
 - Facilitating planning (roles / resources)
 - Identify capacity building needs
 - Identify deliverables
- Review
 - Of the quarterly reports at the desk
 - Field visits every six months

- Facilitate peer review workshops
- On line support (in special cases)
- Crisis Management

What are the deliverables for SSRO

- Desk appraisal reports
- Orientation workshop reports
- Feedback to PACS on partner quarterly reports
- Review visit reports
- Consolidated quarterly reports
- Peer review workshop reports

Expectations from SS representative (consultant)

- Dates (in advance)
- During visit, if documents (related) are asked for, make them available.
- PACS staff should be available during visit of the consultants.
- Consultant will keep 100 percent confidentiality.
- Share all information with the consultant, keep transparency, be honest so that he can provide you useful suggestions.
- Have to use the baseline survey- can be a benchmark for tracking changes in the situation, you progress and also helps in developing you institutional history.
- Consultant will also provide a report.

One partner said that ever since bilateral programme have started, there has been a flood of consultants. Therefore, we should know who the consultant is? Why did he become a consultant? Is he marketing himself? Can partner organisations report on the conflicts, if conflicts arise? What is the conflict resolution mechanism? Are the consultants accountable to you?

Ms. Kiran Sharma replied that the idea behind keeping a consultant is that he will bring objectivity in the report. It will be ensured that he has at least a basic idea and perspective on developments and will act more as a guide who can help, or support, or suggest, but not interfere.

State anchor, Mr. Avneesh will remain. Moreover, the consultant's performance will be monitored by PACS. The review will be done by all. At no point, the consultant will call the organisation to his office.

A question was again raised that in the selection of the consultants will the partner organisation have a say?

It was replied that no individual consultant will be selected. It will be a group of 3 to 4 people. They are in touch with a number of agencies. No set criteria have been laid down, but realizing the responsibility, obviously experienced people will be selected. They are already talking to some. They will get back to us, give us the short listed, and ask for our suggestions.

The first contract will be for 3 months, and only after a review will a decision be taken whether he will continue or not. In the Peer Review Workshop, the partners can always approve or disapprove the consultants. They added that for linkages with the state, they are aware of it. Therefore, they are looking for state level agencies. At no point, the consultant will not do anything for personal gain. Part of his job is also to identify NGOs in the state experienced in specific area. Also, financial assistance will be provided to the smaller NGO from this group.

Three groups were formed to discuss and decide on issues on which the NGOs will do advocacy, to the presented the following day, after three more presentations.

Day Two

After a brief recap of the proceedings of the former day by 3 participants voluntarily, solidarity of Nations made its presentation.

Solidarity of Nations

The theme taken up by solidarity of Nations is economic empowerment of fisherfolk. The area of operation covers 148 villages with a total population of 30,835 out of which 30 percent belong to the *Malhar* community (the target group). The land holding is very low. Only 10 percent of the houses are "*pucca*". Though 22 percent of the males and 17 percent of the females are literate, it is very basic in nature. Besides a high level lack of awareness, the area is flood prone, and the Malhars suffer exploitation from certain power groups. Therefore, the *components they are trying to address* in their programme are:

- Formation of SHGs (for sustainable development)
- Revival of IGPs (at local level)
- Application of flood-control measures and regeneration of natural resource.
- Organising exposure trips, linkage building, etc.

The *activities* carried out during the past six months were:

- Carrying out a baseline survey.
- Documentation of experiences
- Organising rallies.
- Organising orientation workshops
- Formation of CBOs at the local level.
- Establishment of a school
- Distribution of "*pattas*"
- Linkage building

A few *queries* were raised:

- The figures of population, etc. are from survey or government records?
 - What have you done to stop migration?
 - How could you manage so many activities in just 6 months?
 - Have you initiated any programme for *Malhar* women?
 - How much has been the people's participation?

The NGO replied that:

- Most of data came out of the survey. The block office does not have full information, especially about the small hamlets housing half a dozen families.
- Till IGPs which they can relate to or learn willingly are not initiated, migration cannot be stopped. Therefore, IGPs are being introduced.
- 6 months is not that short a time 3 months was spent in survey work and the remaining 3 in other activities. However, linkages with the banks have yet to be formed.

- We are conferring with the women to identify any long-term plan that can be initiated.
- The participation of the people has been quite encouraging, especially in the area of regeneration of natural resources and environmental education (in the school).

Bhartiya Manav Samaj Kalyan Sewa Sansthan (BMSKSS), and Partners

BMSKSS is attempting to initiate an effective decentralized planning process and ensure the participation of Dalits and Tribals. For this, they have chosen 12 villages which is being developed as a model. The theme taken up is Food insecurity owing to their own lack of awareness, the government's policy and programme, the power groups exploitation at the local level, and natural disasters to be dovetailed into Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which are as yet non-functional.

The needs of the *project* are:

- Developing social relationships
- Developing a proper planning process
- Making the PRIs functional
- Capacity building initiative for the community
- Promotion of livelihood related activities.

In live with the needs, *objectives* were listed out and implemented which are as under:

- Capacity building of elected representatives
- Capacity building of partner organisations
- Preparation and implementation of need-base programme
- Rapport-building with different stakeholders

The *learning* that have emerged are ad follows:

- There is a need to develop a second line of leadership
- There should be effective coordination between the multi-sectoral teams.
- To be gender-sensitive as well as sensitive to the different castes, classes, religions, etc.

- To ensure participation of Government officials in the programmes.
- To ensure formal meetings of the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha.

As spill-over, a marked increase in the participation of women is visible:

Two *queries* raised were:

- How did you bring different stakeholders on the same platform?
- What mechanism have you adopted in PDS?

The NGO replied that continuous meetings, monthly, quarterly and regular contact enabled it to rope in different stakeholders. Also direct interventions were initiated in a limited way. However, no structural efforts went into it.

“*Vikas Tolis*” (development groups) have been formed in each village to monitor the PDS and other programmes too. Around 6 to 7 programmes of the Government are monitored. Moreover, there is applicable participation and support from the BDO, the ADO(Panchayats), and other stakeholders

Purvanchal Manav Kalyan Sansthan (PMKS), Maharajganj

With the objective of security of *dalit* rights and total development of *dalit* women, PMKS has been operational area of 100 Gram Sabhas. The *activities* carried out by the NGO are as under:

- 100 NFE centres established
- 15 SHGs formed and accounts opened in banks; Target – 100 SHGs
- Two hand-pumps installed. Target – 12 handpumps
- Training programmes on PRA, SHG and Leadership Development organised
- Camps on Health Awareness and Panchayati Raj organised.
- Capacity Building trainings for staff were also organised.

The *outputs* are as under:

- Awareness of the Community has increased

- Process of formation of 50 percent of SHGs is almost over.
- There is a high demand for hand pumps
- 3000 children have been enrolled in the NFEs
- 60 percent of women are participating in the programmes
- The habit of saving has caught on
- Training for capacity building of elected representatives has been organised.

A number of queries regarding installation of pumps and education were raised. The replied that it was the groups formed in villages that installed the pumps. Each group also paid an extra Rs. 2/- for maintenance of the hand pumps.

Kits for analysing the water was obtained from UNICEF. To ensure location of installation, the activity was linked with drinking water.

It has only 3 months since the NFEs have been established. The drop-outs have been targeted. The aim is to generate awareness of the importance of education-seeing the number of children enrolled; the realization of the importance is evident.

The admitted that though they did do a bit of advocacy with CMS, it was not enough, and in the light of the issues in the area, more needed to be done.

Ashok Bhai, Director of SSK, applauded the Chief Functionaries efforts, who leaving politics and coming into development was facing a number of challenges and was happy to see his commitment. He assured him of his support in future too.

Action Aid - Maharajganj

Mr. Sanjeev Pandey said that Action Aid too with its focus on welfare state and participatory action research as its strategy was going to work in the areas of responsive administration, law and the poor. Ashok Bhai of SSK wanted to know how they would share the learning that will emerge because a number of local NGOs will be looking minutely at your work. Mr. Pandey clarified that they would be published and added that this was a pilot phase. Ashok Bhai cautioned against developing a parallel structure which might create a dependency syndrome.

Finally, it was the turn of the 3 groups to make their presentations on the SWOT analysis and issues for advocacy.

Group 1: Women Empowerment

The first group presented the SWOT exercise and issues for advocacy in the area of women empowerment. The presentation as made by the group is as under:

Strengths:

- Our sensitivity towards women related issues
- Women being one of the main target groups
- Learning that have been derived from programme specifically implemented for women empowerment
- Having women staff members
- Effective of the programme increases if implemented by women staff members
- Successful women as a result of intervention being seen as role model

Weaknesses

- Lesser sensitisation of males on women related issues
- Keeping women in a limited role
- Lack of effective and efficient female staff members in the organisations
- Lack of women networks
- Lack of women leaders
- Lack of information on women related issues
- Lack of adequate and requisite access to and representation of women in various decision making forums

Opportunities

- Reservation for women
- Special legal and constitutional provisions for women
- Women oriented development programmes
- Gradually changing perspective of women
- Participation of women in economic activities

Constraints

- Lack of education
- Social norms and taboos
- Double standards
- Insecurity

- Lack of sensitiveness and effective administration
- Gender inequality
- Lack of confidence

Issues for advocacy

- To make women related laws more effective
- Effective implementation of women related development programmes
- Advocacy on the basis of identified local level issues
- To make education of the girl child mandatory

A lot of confusion prevailed over the shortcomings. Some felt that in spite of our best efforts at empowering women financially, socially, politically, they still remain in the background. They did not want to come to the forefront themselves. Others felt that it was our shortcoming since we were not tackling the real issue viz. a policy statement. But it was also argued that a general policy for the entire country would not suffice since issues differed from place to place. Empowerment of women had to be viewed in a different way.

Group 2: Panchayat Raj

The presentation made by the second group is as under:

Strengths

- Good understanding of issues
- Constitutional status of panchayats
- Relatively more awareness among members of gram panchayats and gram sabhas
- Perceived linkages from gram sabha to lok sabha

Weaknesses

- Lack of access to requisite information
- Lack of political willingness
- Non co-operation from bureaucracy
- Social discrimination

Opportunities

- Existence of a network to perform advocacy at the state and national level
- Willingness among donors and other organisations to extend support

- NGOs are at present working on issues related to local self – governance

Threats

- To garner political support at the state level
- Lack of organisations
- Political and administrative instability
- Lack of requisite capacities

Issues for advocacy

- Effective implementation of legal provisions relating to panchayat raj
- Right to information
- Implementation of decentralised planning process
- Effective development and participation of new and emerging leadership in panchayats

The second group (Panchayati Raj) elicited responses from the others that Nyay Panchayat should be taken more seriously and along with it the DPC should also be strengthened. Just strengthening the GP and GS will not have the desired effect. Hardly anything is being done in the area of KP and ZP. More CSOs need to be involved. At presently only the media seemed to be important. The issue of leadership of Dalits and women should merit serious consideration. In some cases, DPC has not been formed and advocacy is required. Whatever has been done in Panchayati Raj is just a drop in the ocean.

Group 3: Dalit and Marginalised Groups

Strengths

- Existence of people's organisation
- Wide presence in the field
- CSOs are working on related issues
- Caste organisations are in existence
- Information on related issues is available
- Studies on related issues exist and there exists capacity to conduct studies
- Support from various actors
- Prior experience is there

Weaknesses

- Lack of leadership

- Lack of requisite resources
- Insensitivity of local administration
- Lack of basic data
- Insensitivity of different stakeholders
- Lack of effective strategy

Threats

- Dominance of certain powerful groups
- Not united
- Lack of clarity of perspective
- Corruption in administration
- Lack of political will
- Political and administrative instability

Opportunities

- State and national level politicians from the community
- Formulation of the BPL List is in process
- Co-operation for policy intervention is available
- Initiatives by media

Issues for advocacy

- Reviewing of the scheduled list of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes
- Transparency in selection of families below poverty line
- Oppression of customary rights
- Effective rehabilitation of the displaced
- Similar education for all
- Right to information

The participants felt that the subject of the group was such that there was bound to be confusion in which point should go into strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. The participants felt that the issues of race, religion, caste and class was too broad and had different dimensions and connotations in different places and contexts. Certain evils like untouchability and dowry exist even today. It was pointed out that a number of studies existed on such topics. The group however felt that the studies were different by different agencies. The whole issue needs a fresh look.

Winding up, Avneesh (of DA) said that in PRI, there is a need to bring the gram sabha the committees and the elected representative closer. For women to be empowered, they should have the power to make decisions. It should be remembered that we should promote leadership not leaders.

The final analysis made by Ashok Bhai (of SSK) was as under:

- The issues need to be taken up as a challenge since they exist,
- On certain issues, policy should be shaped through advocacy.
- The NGOs have always worked on the above topics. PRI encompasses all the three. The final goal of the three is to strengthen the PRIs.

Further, it was elaborated by Avaneesh that this process that has begun needs to be carried forward by the local partners of PACS. It was also informed that the Management Consultants are interested in handing over this process to the organisations that are involved in the programme in the state but at the same time necessary and requisite support for the same would be made available by the Management Consultants. This, it was put forward by the Management Consultants would help in developing an ownership towards the programme. Hence, it was agreed upon by all that a core group from among the partners be forward which should steer the process forward. Accordingly, a **core group** comprising representatives from 12 partner organisations was formed. It was decided that a separate meeting of the core – group will be organised to decide upon the future course of action.