

Draft Report

Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme

Report

Of

**SIXTH PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP
Maharashtra**

MARCH 25TH-26TH 2006

AT

YASHADA, Pune

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We would like to acknowledge the state coordinating committee for the successful coordination of the workshop. We extend our thanks to SEDT, the coordinating agency for all the arrangements, logistic support during the workshop.

We are also grateful to our state based Resource Organisations - Green Earth, Constructive Catalyst, Pragati Consultants, HRD, and Sampark for facilitating the workshop.

It would be noteworthy to thank all the external resource persons for sharing their knowledge and valuable ideas during the workshop.

Draft

Workshop report

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 PACS Programme – A Broad Perspective

The Department for International Development (DFID) of UK Government initiated the PACS programme in India, to strengthen Civil Society Organizations engaged in poverty alleviation programmes.. The PACS programme goal is empower the poor to exercise their rights and realize their entitlements.

1.2 PACS Peer Learning Workshop -

The peer group workshops held twice a year, were aimed to provide a platform for promoting sustainable development among the partner organizations, to share and learn through interaction, dissemination of information and address pertinent development concerns at the state level for advocacy purpose.

It analyzes reviews and synthesizes the existing programmes performance, to identify capacity building needs of partners and provide strategic directions to the projects by introducing effective management systems.

1.3 PACS Peer Learning Workshops In Maharashtra –An Overview

Five Peer Learning Workshops were organised By PACS for CSO partners of Maharashtra. The PACS programme is implemented by 22 CSOs in the two emerging cluster districts of the Marathwada and the Vidarbha.

1st Peer Learning Workshop

The first Peer group review workshop was held on 12th and 13th July 2003 at Aurangabad. The workshop emphasized on various strategies to enhance programme utility and effectiveness.

2nd Peer Learning Workshop

The 2nd Peer Learning Workshop was held at Aurangabad at MCED (Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development) from 11th to 13th March 2004. The theme for this workshop was "Advocacy". Experts from

Centre For Advocacy and Research, New Delhi, underlined the importance of media advocacy for initiating policy change.

3rd Peer Learning Workshop

The 3rd workshop on Peer Learning Workshop was organized from 13 to 15th September 2004. The focus was on finalization of a draft manifesto on drought designing a MEAL rollout plan and Peer review cross visits.

4th Peer Learning Workshop

The 4th workshop on Peer Learning Workshop was organized from 13 to 15th March 2004. The workshop dealt with the impact of movements on policy change, feedback on cross learning visits by CSOs and initiation of MEAL phase II.

5th Peer Learning Workshop

The 5th workshop on Peer Learning Workshop was organized at YASHADA Pune from to 15th September 2005.

6th Peer Learning Workshop

PACS Programme - The 6th PLW (Peers' Learning Workshop) of Maharashtra partners – A Report

The 6th PLW (peers' learning workshop) for Maharashtra partners was organised on 25th and 26th March 2006 at YASHADA Training Institute, Pune. It focused on broader understanding of NREGA EGS, RTI and gender perspective.

It was attended by representatives of 117 voluntary organizations working as partners in the program in 11 poorest districts of Maharashtra State.

2 Workshop proceedings –6th PLW

Welcome and Introduction – *Mr Suryakant Kulkarni of SEDT* (Socio Economic Development Trust), Parbhani, the coordinating agency, welcomed the participants and guest speakers. Medha Kulkarni of Sampark shared the PLW agenda for the 1st day. The session began with a prayer.

2.1 PACS Presentation: An overview – of PACS programmes

Poonam Mehta, PACS, State Manager, reiterated the PACS programmes aims to strengthen the civil society organizations to enable to poor to access entitlements.

She reviewed the goals, purpose and the expected output of the program, and explained the program plans to cover 1,084 development blocks of 108 districts in 6 states of India, with 11 districts in the State of Maharashtra. So far the programmes covers a population of 1 crore. Over 133 projects have been approved and there are 487 partner organizations involved in the project. About 19,286 CSOs are associated with the program.

Ms Poonam Mehta described the key program elements as : -

1. Program governance
2. Program reach out, networking and liaison
3. Project management
4. Capacity building
5. Advocacy and communications and
6. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) system.

More than 15,000 CSOs were trained for institutionalized functions and responsibilities and their leadership capabilities explored.

Ms Poonam explained how the MEAL system guided CSOs in three ways:- helped self-assessment and documentation; enhanced understanding and learning and strengthened accountability and responsibility.

She outlined the key programme strategies of PACS programmes at the national level She stressed that Advocacy and Communication have become an integral part of service delivery to the community. Communications and advocacy have had salutary effect in respect of land rights, responsive local self-governance, disaster preparedness and management and livelihood promotion.

She informed that the projects in Maharashtra were concentrated in Marathwada and Vidharbha where strong clusters were emerging for deeper concentrated efforts. In Marathwada, the beneficiaries of the program have been mainly Dalits, women and residents of urban slums; whereas in Vidarbha, the program has concentrated on tribal welfare, women empowerment and bio-diversity.

She said that the PLW besides capacity building of CSOs also captures learning for future contribution and the social economic and political empowerment of the target population.

Kiran Sharma, Program Director, PACS emphasized the critical role of CSOs to learn to influence policy through implementation guidelines and demonstrate to the government about programme implementation. She described the dynamic progression of the program from empowerment to livelihood. After helping the poorest sections of the society getting empowered, stress has to be moved to procuring livelihood and a rights-based share in the fruits of progress. The program has accordingly shifted its focus on these subjects from last year.

This is where the newly made acts, viz. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Right to Information (RTI) Act, play important roles in empowering people.

DAY 1

SESSION I – NREGA and EGS

3 **Panelists:**

- Comrade Suresh Gawli – Union Leader (People's Organization to Resolve Problems and one of the conveners of the coordinating committee comprising of over 40 organisations of EGS workers, agricultural labourers).
- Mr. Shyam Despande – Dy. Commissioner EGS, Pune, (NGO Mitra –40 organizations).
- Prof. Ramesh Saran – Reader, Jharkhand University and a member of the Projects Selection Committee for PACS.

The session was devoted to clarify the NREGS and EGS introduced by the Central Government. The panelists were experts in their respective fields and provided a broad perspective on these two Central Government Acts.

3.1 **NREGA – issues – By Mr. Gawli**

The first speaker Mr Gawli outlined the following issues on NREGS: -

- Comparison of rural urban rural employment initiatives. Concessions and incentives offered to industry and the service sector has increased, whereas the investment in agriculture has steadily declined. Consequently rural employment has gone down giving rise to Naxalist unrest among the rural youth in as many as 10 states in the country.
- 57% of the Indian people (who have only 22% of the national GDP) depend upon agriculture for their livelihood.
- 43% urban and semi-urban people have 78% of the national GDP.
- Comparison of the NREGA of the Central Government and the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of Maharashtra Government to highlight the improvement opportunities.

3.2 **NREGA**

- Pertinent provisions of NREGA - planning process of the work will commence at the village level, 10% extra payment will be made for employment out of the taluka, nature of work under NREGA is going to be 60% unskilled and 40% skilled, thus offering better opportunities for the untrained rural person whose principal occupation is agriculture, and so on.

- The PACS partners could monitor the proper implementation of the law, to ensure registration of the people not for unemployment allowance, but for demanding work and organize people and endeavor to make farm labourers self reliant.
- Voluntary organizations as social auditors for proper implementation of the act by government machinery. Observations and suggestions of the organizations would carry weight in the evaluation of government officers and the entire state machinery would receive valuable training from such suggestions, etc. The act itself provides for discussions, dialogue and active involvement of all the stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring process.

3.3 EGS

- One important observation - the number of female workers in EGS were more than 50% and which was on the rise. The scheme has provided employment to tribals, dalits, farm labourers and marginal farmers in rain fed areas.
- Another important feature of EGS was that wages paid were almost 70% of the total expenses. However, there are certain negative aspects such as delayed payment, fake payments, non-payment of unemployment allowance, lack of a number of promised amenities like crèche, drinking water and first aid at the work site. There is also a lack of vigilance and coordination, poor record maintenance, non-payment of disability compensation and low level of access to assets created.
- Voluntary organizations could work for capacity building and demystification of record keeping, understanding muster rolls, etc. Social audit has to be done starting with registration to job cards to quality of work and access to assets created.
- The percentage of investment by Government in NREGA has decreased.

4 ***NREGA and Food Security – By Prof. Saran***

The second speaker Prof Saran outlined the strengths, weakness of NREGA and the challenges before the CSOs in implementing the Act came into force after a lot of struggle. It has helped to strengthen the provisions made in the Directive principals of The Constitution of India. He dealt at length on Food security and Government policies. He added that the experience of EGS in Maharashtra helped the Centre to formulate the Act.

12 districts of Maharashtra are in the NREGA list (1ST phase). Work will be allotted anywhere in the district. So far 9½ lakhs workers have registered in Nagpur district of Maharashtra.

4.1 NREGA Strengths -

- The Act has strengthened the provisions made in the Directive Principles.
- The experience of Maharashtra EGS – 50% women - increased female participation
- 21.74% Adivasis and 29% Dalits as registered workers
- Rising Employment generation
- Rain fed areas – marginal farmers covered
- Wage provision – 70% of the expenses
- Unemployment wages
- Three-member sub-committee to make changes.

NREGA Weakness –

- Fake delayed payment, lack of transparency
- Poor quality of work
- Incomplete work
- Promised provision (crèches, drinking water, first Aid) not provided wages
- Lack of disability compensation and medical re-imburement
- Lack of vigilance committee
- Poor record maintenance
- Non-elimination of contractors.

Prof. Saran explained the provisions made for food security by the Government - the guarantee of food with employment (35 kgs. per adult) : -

- "Antodaya" card - for BPL (includes for disabled, pregnant women, old people and ill members of family)
- "Mid - Day Meals" – guarantee of 200 days of food for poor children (not implemented properly).
- "Anganwadi Scheme" – covers children, pregnant women, adolescent girls (all hamlets not reached).

4.3 Challenges before CSOs

- Capacity building of target community – (record keeping, muster rolls, demystification of procedures). Organize Workers as a pressure group to create work.
- Social audit process at all stages (registration, job cards, quality of work, access creation). Supreme Court judgment – social audit be done in Gram Sabha. Preparing list of workers - Maharashtra has 44% of population below Poverty line.
- Utilize the advantages of existing PRI system of Maharashtra (In Jharkhand – absence of Panchayat Raj could pose problems in implementation of NREGA).
- CSO can ensure that all the food security entitlements reach the target group.
- Ensure that minimum 33% work is allotted to women
- Be a watch guard for NREGA and feed information at National level – to arrest corruption (as was seen in EGS scandal -Solapur).

5 **EGS – some salient issues – By Mr. Shyam Despande**

Mr. Shyam Despande, Dy. Commissioner EGS highlighted the differences between the Maharashtra EGS and National NREGA.

Mr. Despande discussed the following: -

- Social Audit – Social pressure on the government officials to make them work. It has given opportunity for the people to check the quality of work done by the government officials, and bring their faults to the notice of the Government.
- The need for registration of labourers for which application on plain paper be made giving all the family details of the labourer applying for a job card.
- The Act states that division of work be on 50-50 basis between the Government and the village Gram Panchayat.
- Retrospective Audit - no provision made in the EGS. Only ongoing audit provisions made.
- Training modules needed – to improve the skills of the government officials.
- The NREG Act has provisions for discussion meets, workshops which the CSO can utilize.
- Need for computerization.
- Motivate people to generate pressure to attract committed officials.

5.1 Question –Answer session: -

The audience had several questions and effort was made to answer satisfactorily.

- for e.g. queries raised were as follows -

- EGS vested with rich contractors – leading to massive Corruption. What is the remedy?
- What is the terminology for a 'mazdoor' (labourer)?
- Need to have a separate Gram Sabha for labourers?
- Further clarification on Section 16 – social audit? Concept of people's government?
- The Agriculture Department opposition to the corruption (EGS) of Solapur Zilla
- Coordination Committee representatives – all parties be represented.

The speakers clarified the doubts quoting specific provisions of law and complainants were requested to approach the coordinating committee for follow up. The government representative stated that the concept of social audit was acceptable to Maharashtra Government and a Government Resolution would soon be released delineating the rolls of beneficiaries and the Gram Sabha in such audit. He also promised to look into specific complaints.

SESSION II -

6 RTI – EXPERTS OPINION

Panelists:

- Ms Nandini Ghanekar, Deputy Chief Executive Officer,
- Mr. Sharad Borde, retired IAS officer,
- Mr. Madhav Gokhale, Assistant Editor Maharashtra Herald; activist (victims of dam projects, etc.)
- Mr Manish Sisodia, an activist from Delhi.

6.1 Ms Nandini Ghanekar, Deputy Chief Executive Officer –

Briefly enumerated the activities conducted at the RETI department of YASHADA, Pune. Extolling the advantages of RTI, Ms Nandini Ghanekar, traced the antecedents of secrecy in governance, which began with the British rule and which continued years later in Independent India.

The rights of the remotest rural people – are they comfortable to approach an authority and demand their rights? She stressed the need to resolve problems through discussions.

6.2 Mr. Sharad Borde, retired IAS officer, dealt at length quoting sections from the RTI Act.

He questioned that if the Indian Constitution has given the rights to its citizens then why the need for a separate Act? He clarified that the need was to make it suitable and easy for the common man. Information is the foundation of a good democracy. Objective of RTI act – to induce transparency and accountability and arrest corruption. The ordinary citizen should be in a position to influence Government.

NGOs have opportunity to play the role of PIO to recommend or reject applications sent to first Appellate Authority (which is under the Public Authority). The Act will encourage the officials to realize their responsibilities rather force their authority.

Major uses of the Act for -

- Personal use
- Seek information, analyze and ask the government.

Mr. Borde advised that to create a proper system the act is to be implemented properly.

6.3 Mr. Madhav Gokhale, Assistant Editor Maharashtra Herald, spoke about RTI act and the role of media. Using real life incidents, Mr. Gokhale related the impact of information on the consumer. He stressed the role played by the media in pointing the lacunae when the draft on RTI was released.

Even before the RTI media sought information through various sources to get to the truth – a role which it still continues to play. The introduction of RTI has helped the media to ask pointed questions to the government. Majority of small towns journalists in Maharashtra have made effective use of RTI, as also the

states of MP and Rajasthan. However precaution needs to be taken that information gained through RTI should not be misused.

Mr. Gokhale pointed that the media has so far not publicized the RTI extensively, as its concentration was in getting information that would boost paper sales. The question was whether to publicize the information got from RTI, a big challenge before the media.

6.4 *Mr. Manish Sisodia*, activist from Delhi, stressed that the RTI was a powerful sword to in the hands of a common citizen in a democratic society, which should be used with care. Quoting several instances of success of using RTI in different states Mr. Sisodia provided ways and means to elicit information from the officials.

Procedure to use the act was described in detail and a number of examples were quoted to underline important points. The PACS partners learnt that the act is applicable to all public authorities including any institution that has received public money and the provisions of the act are not restricted to the project / scheme for which such funds have been received; but apply to other activities of the organization as well. Further, the act directs all 'public authorities' to disclose all relevant information voluntarily to all concerned so that the need to seek information should not arise.

It was also stressed that seeker of information is not bound to give any reason for his request and that such request may be sent to the assistant information officer who is duty-bound to direct it to the concerned department.

The act was described as a means that works faster than bribes and everyone purchased a CD or a hard copy produced by Mr. Sisodia's organization explaining the act.

6.5 *Question and answer session –*

There were several questions posed to the panelists, which they tried to answer satisfactorily. Some of the questions raised: -

- Why is it that in Delhi/Pune the Act is not implemented in full?
- If information is asked from an NGO should only relevant details or all the information be given? (NGO as a Public Authority receiving Government funds for any project should divulge all the information).
- If a Dalit asks information from the village Sarpanch (Gram Panchayat), will he get it? If not, then what will be the CSOs role in this aspect?
- How is it practically possible for a common man to question an authority especially the one who constantly breaks rules?

Summary of Panel discussion

From their speeches, the participants of PLW learnt that the Indian constitution has conferred the right to information to every citizen; but absence of prescribed procedure put it beyond the reach of the common man. The RTI act has

removed this lacuna and now one has a powerful tool to redress a lot of grievances. It was stressed that the provisions of the act should be used for the sake of public good and not in order to harass any government officer. The people living in the interior are not aware of their rights and voluntary organizations should work to raise their awareness.

One cannot be a conscientious citizen without adequate information about the system and democracy cannot prosper without informed, conscientious citizens. Thus, the purpose of the act is two-fold: to produce informed citizenry and to engender accountability among the government machinery and to contain corruption.

CSO force is very big, one man can find it difficult to question but the CSOs can rally background support to strengthen the common man.

SESSION III

Before the start of the session Mr. Rajesh Agarwal, of Price Water Coopers, gave information on financial aspects for PACS project partners. He briefly enumerated the Accounting and Financial systems to be followed for the projects. Proper guidelines were provided regarding documentation and balance sheets. Release of Funds will depend on ensuring correct entry of funds utilized.

7 **GENDER PERSPECTIVE_IN CSOs By Ms *Neelam Gorhe***

Kiran Sharma, introduced the speaker, Neelam Gorhe as a noted feminist and director of Stree Adhar Kendra, an organization working for women's rights. She also informed that a conference would be convened at Delhi for women employees of PACS partner organizations, where the gender issue will be discussed in detail. She also talked about the proportion of women employees among PACS CSOs.

The need for the conference arose to help understand the issue of Gender in development and to remain open minded. The idea for a national conference rose from the learning of all women staff meeting held at UP.

Ms Gorhe began her talk by tracing the impact on women of issues like religion, caste, region, colour, class race, etc.

She enumerated the various aspects of gender issue, viz. domestic violence, rape, molestation, sexual harassment, female feticide, lower percentage of women in higher echelons of education, business, etc, low number of women in politics and in positions of power, lower wages for women and so on. She also pointed out that women outnumber men in unorganized sectors like vegetable vendors, rag picking, etc.

Explaining the issue, Ms Gorhe asked the PLW participants to consider points such as the right to take decisions regarding one's own body, looking at the world from a woman's perspective, dichotomy in personal behaviour and public position, etc. She declared that knowledge is power and women must acquire

knowledge of power. She said that the government is giving due attention to the issue and the male attitude also is changing. She thanked the media for their positive approach.

7.1 Group Work discussion issues

To facilitate better understanding of the issue of Gender Ms Gorhe, distributed a preplanned questionnaire based on case studies, to the CSOs, who were divided equally in seven groups with a facilitator in each group.

The case study topics were:

- Child marriage is it justifiable?
- Gender-related criteria of a good organization
- Gender equality
- Female members of a Gram Panchayat
- Women 's presence in Politics
- Sexual exploitation at work place
- Rapport between husband and wife

Each of the seven groups held intensive discussions the topic given to them and later made their presentations.

After the exercise, the group responses were discussed. Ms. Gorhe clarified that the exercise induces participants to think on the gender issue and thereby helps increase understanding of the subject. She reminded the attending members that all of them including her were voluntary workers with eight-fold awareness. The eight angles are the family, the issue, the organization, PACS partners, State, National perspective, South Asia and Asia and the Global perspective. One has to strive to attain self- realization on the subject.

It is important to know the source of one's passion and one's energy to overcome impending obstacles. Such source could be the love one receives from one's family or it could also the people offer the support. It is also important to be vigilant about sharing of opportunities one comes across. One can bring about capacity building only by sharing one's knowledge and information.

She stressed the need to form a common front of all oppressed classes such as women, dalits, tribals, project-affected people and farmers. All these groups have to share their experiences and keep analyzing and reviewing them. Relationship with the government should be based on rapport and not on confrontation. In fact, specific areas of possible cooperation should be identified so as to do constructive work.

Summing up

Ms Kiran Sharma expressed that a lot of learning has taken place through the case study exercise and it reflects that the CSOs do not have closed minds on gender issues. This session will be taken forward to organize a series of workshops for greater impact and understanding on gender at all levels.

DAY TWO

After recapitulation of the previous day's sessions the day began with a prayer and songs.

The morning session was devoted to the drought forum, {'*Dushkal Hatavu, Manus Jagavu*' – (Eradicate Drought, Save Humanity)} sharing their experiences of the recently concluded 'Padayatra'.

SESSION I

8 DROUGHT PADAYATRA – EXPERIENCE SHARING facilitated by Green Earth

Each participant involved in the drought forum Padayatra related his or her experiences:

7.1 Role of CSOs in Padayatra - By Ramakant Kulkarni...

The 'Padayatra' walkathon was organized to seek answers, study, understand the problems of people living in drought-like conditions and assess them.

Mr. Kulkarni, who walked all the days of the Padayatra, said that the walkathon covered 165 villages (of 29 blocks) in 10 districts in Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra. About 1,000 kms. were covered in 60 days.

The Drought forum volunteers and well wishers stayed in 49 villages and interacted with local villagers. SHG women, Panchayat members and youth groups were also involved in the processes. People from all walks of life joined the walkathon.

7.2 Issues of Advocacy – By Mr. Ganpat Bhise...

The padayatris – participants in the long walk – had brought back numerous tales of social injustice, of privation, of exploitation and of suffering. Mr. Bhise shared the following concerns of villagers along the Padayatra route which can become issues for advocacy:

17 villagers recorded their concerns as follows: –

- Lack of labour, the poor have no Godfather
- Rs. 15 received as daily wages for the landless
- Lost hope in government which has not fulfilled its promise to give water

- Pardhis – the nomadic tribes - most harassed by landlords and have number of criminal cases filed against them
- Women – spent entire night to fetch water
- Schoolrooms have turned into toilets
- 'Jalswaraj' scheme only for the influential village leaders
- Only 6 newspaper journalists were in the drought forum team –reflect on media coverage
- 13 villages have no Sarpanchs – no one to advocate villagers problems
- There were schools without teachers and hospitals without facilities.

7.3 Learning from Assessment – Green Earth...

Vasant Shende , of Green Earth, presented an assessment of the padayatra which he dedicated to the 'nameless voiceless women, landless families, farmers whose livelihood is threatened, to children deprived of good education, to useless watershed and irrigation structures, to defunct cooperation-based economic institutions, to dried-up bore wells'. 53 persons participated in the assessment study, which took up more than 1200 man-days.

A number of agencies such as Green Earth, Masoom, Pratham, Srujan, Dnyan Prabodhini, Catalyst Management Services, Women's Collective (T. N.) were involved in the study. The areas of enquiry covered were livelihood mechanisms, hunger and food security, irrigation, effect of draught on women, children and deprived people, etc. presentations were supported by photographs.

Thereafter Mr. Kaustubh gave critical observations made from this exercise. He also presented alternatives for future action. In conclusion, Mr. Chandrakant Deokar gave an account of the follow up done subsequent to the padayatra. Capacity building and self-reliance were made the central issues and not charity. Villages were selected for action programs and the choice was based on demands raised by the villagers, their inclination to participate in alleviation efforts.

The need for unity and regular sessions of Gram Sabha was stressed and enthusiastic persons in the villages were entrusted with the responsibility in the implementation of schemes drawn in this regard. A number of villages were thus activated. It may be concluded that the padayatra did culminate into a form of people's movement for sustainable development.

7.4 Women and Drought...

Ms. Meghna Kulkarni and Ms Sangeeta Gaikwad

- Ms. Kulkarni gave an account of the status of women in drought prone villages. She said –
 - Droughts impact heavily on the weaker sections of the society like, women, dalits, the old and the infirm.
 - Men in the landless families are always migrating in search of work; but drought forces entire families to migrate.
 - The droughts have added misery and burden on the victimized women.

- Women left behind face exploitation at the hands of powerful elements in the village and when they migrate, all their activities are exposed to the elements.
- Women (separated, widows) have no place in EGS as only couples are allowed to work.
- Women labourers with children at construction work sites – lack of security for children and women face abuse from employers.
- Scourge jungles at night for firewood to prevent being caught by forest guards.
- Incidents where women and girls fall prey to sexual abuse in their desperate bid to survive.
- Drought forces poor families to marry off girls before they mature.

She observed that the padayatra did exhibit a large participation of women. She underscored that with necessary information women will initiate action.

- ***Ms Sangeeta Gaikwad ...*** – narrated that all along the route the villagers expectantly extended support. In non-PACS areas there was support because it handled people's issues. People were the centre point and their opinions were respected. Padayatra gave village women, a platform, and an opportunity to express their thoughts, in the Gram Sabhas.

Ms Sangeeta Gaikwad recounted an incident of misconduct with woman belonging to Paradhi (a nomadic tribe). This happened on the day when the Padayatra was about to have a Gram Sabha meeting in that village and they were compelled by village elders to cancel the meet and leave the village.

- ***Reaction of CSOs***

Above incident upset the participants. It was decided to form a fact-finding committee to obtain a report at the earliest so as to decide upon the course of action. All assembled agreed that immediate and unambiguous action had to be taken to demonstrate the solidarity among the PACS partners on such issues of grave social injustice.

7.5 Tribes, Dalits and Drought – Mr. Madhukar Dhas and Mr. B P Suryavanshi

Related the status of dalits and tribals in the drought prone villages visited during the Padayatra: -

- The community resides on the outskirts of the villages.
- They attended community meetings but were seen to be seated in a corner.
- 9 months a year – drought like situation to be faced year after year.
- Lack of land, no labour work, no assets (huts, cattle mortgaged for survival) - caught in a hopeless tangle.
- Impact more on children and old people, when couple migrates leaving children with old parents.

7.6 PACS and Drought – Ms Kiran Sharma, was overwhelmed at the drought forum's achievements. Had PACS MC not made its commitment on droughts it would not have reached where it is has today. She informed the gathering that PACS had already committed a sum of Rs.25 lakhs to the forum and added that funds will not be wanting for any initiatives to be drawn by the forum.

She commented that the functioning of the forum was much like MEALS discipline involving regular meetings, discussions and assessment. She also wanted the drought forum to bring out, in addition to the comprehensive report, advocacy booklets to track individual issues in line departments. Such booklets will serve as a blue print for schemes for transfer of appropriate technology to the rural areas.

She added that one should plan as to how the village level micro planning as a part of drought forum activity could be merged to NREGA. There was a need to bring technology to the people and she saw many opportunities through this forum.

Ms. Sharma said that if we need to come closer to the community we should be able to demonstrate that a little bit of commitment goes a long way. MC has certain concerns which we need to track it down.

7.7 Future Strategies – Mr. Anil Shidore of Green Earth said that the challenge of Padayatra began in the PLW forum. The end result will be to take some action. The question is whether the action taken will be appropriate and enough? Need to broaden one's view and break down the barriers and think of suitable framework to seek answers. The problem of drought is very deep, intensive and severe. Hence the future strategies should be action oriented.

7.8 Comments on Presentation by Drought Forum– Prof Saran

Prof Saran expressed that the very purpose of the PACS program was to empower weaker sections like dalits and women. PACS program works in poorest areas and that is where incidences of injustice, disparity are more glaring. The battle to fight these is grave since the deep social divide is a chronic malaise.

The administration is indifferent to the needs of the poor – there is the mental attitude of ruling the people.

Participation of such weaker sections in the decision-making process has to go up and the entire process has to become more transparent. Providing livelihood is not to be viewed as relief but as the fulfillment of the right to life. He added that the padayatra had achieved the objective of bringing these issues to the fore and also had initiated study.

However Prof. Saran had a few concerns regarding the Drought Forum: -

1) Transparency – The padayatra had many funding agencies involved – the questions arose as to how much each has contributed; discussion of

processes of funding with partners; and have the 60 villages (selected for padayatra) been told of the funding support.

- 2) There was a concern whether it is going to be a sustainable struggle.- for the three most affected groups – Dalits, Tribals and women. Is there a sustainable plan for the Drought Forum for the next 10 or 15 years.
- 3) How have the Dalits been involved in this process – what place will they have.

At the level of PACS efforts will be made to select an activity for funding support. Here the RTI could be used for the benefit of the people. He again reiterated his concern that the Green earth's efforts be backed by a 10 year plan with transparency, involving the dalits, women, tribals in the full process to challenge droughts.

Response from Green Earth:

Mr. Makarand Sahasrabuddhe in reply to pro Saran's concerns assured that the drought forum was an on-going activity irrespective of any aid or funding and across the PACS partners. He added that the problem is not restricted to the rural area but also affected urban part as well. Ultimately, the objective is to remove disparity wherever. He also gave details of the planning of the padayatra and the contributing agencies. According to him, bulk of the load was borne by the villages in the drought-prone area and the volunteer padayatris themselves.

SESSION II

8 IT and Development –By Anamoy Ranjan (Tara Haat, New Delhi)

The Speaker of the afternoon session, Mr. Ranjan, stressed on the importance of information technology in development. Mr. Ranjan presented his views on the reach of IT to empower people. IT opens avenues of knowledge and great possibilities.

He related the efforts made by TARA Kendra (recognised by ISSRO) involved in spreading information through Education, Vocational training and Communication. Information was offered on varied topics ranging from Agriculture, entrepreneurships, and development to telemedicine, which can reach the village consumer. It also offers 20 days functional literacy programme for women.

In the era of information technology boom, there was an urgent need for people to achieve their aspirations through the use of IT. He briefed the CSOs

about the achievements made by TARA (Technology and Action for Rural Advancement). He advised the PACS CSOs could start a resource center in their area with minimal grants.

SESSION III

9 *Fund raising in Development Need and Opportunities By Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Surat Sandhu (Chairperson of Resource Alliance of Business and Community Foundation)*

The speaker provided information of the fundamentals of fundraising and the need for concentrated efforts at fund raising specifically for the CSOs. He said that here were diverse resources available and for a CSO there should be not more than 25% dependency on any one funding agency. This ensures funding stability. He related different parameters for fund raising.

He advised CSOs to maintain transparency, legitimacy and accountability to secure the trust of funding agencies.

SESSION IV

9 *MEAL Update – By Mr. Rakesh Ganguli, MEAL Coordinator, Maharashtra*

Rakesh Ganguli, MEAL Coordinator explained the meal process. He informed that the quality of MEAL reports from CSO has improved. However there was further need do better and also take support of ROs and PST to improve the quality of -

- Reflection exercise in the reports.
- Capacity building trainings - tracking changes.
- Efforts made to include RTI, NREGA processes.
- Quantitative data.
- Efforts made to dialogue with Government officials.
- State Synthesis report – need for adequate information from CSOs.
- CBIA exercises – to complete the processes initiated to cover the entire project area.
- OD – 1st phase process to begin with select CSOs (50% cost to be shared by CSOs).

He suggested that the SHG details in the form prepared by Dr. Soni (Pragati Consultants) was not submitted by CSOs. PACS needs the SHG information for compiling and studying the mechanism. April 16th was the deadline set for submission of a soft and hard copy by the CSOs.

SESSION V

10 CONCLUDING SESSION

Chief Guest, Mr. Krishna Boghe. Divisional Commissioner, Aurangabad and special invitee Dr Mukund Ghare (AFARM).

Ms. Kiran Sharma, welcomed the guests to the largest civil society programme in the country - PACS, Which does not have any fixed agenda on emerging issues. There is a lot of flexibility of approach so that the poor are enabled to access rights and entitlements.

10.1 Dr. Mukund Ghare –

According to Dr. Ghare a two-fold program for managing water availability and soil fertility could provide a reprieve. He also said that the fruits of the green revolution did not reach the farmers but were usurped by agricultural input suppliers. He also stressed the need to supplement agricultural income by some additional activity like dairy, poultry, etc.

Concluding the discussions, Dr Ghare reminded all that mere talk of development without stressing entitlement is futile. He implored everybody to decide commitments before initiating action.

10.2 The valedictory address by Mr. Krishna Boghe

Mr. Krishna Boghe, Divisional Commissioner, and Aurangabad made the valedictory address. Mr. Boghe enlightened the participants in the PLW with the nature of rural poverty. He said that poverty begins in rural areas and is transported to urban areas. Hence the focus of poverty alleviation should be in rural areas.

He showed that government investments in agriculture are steadily declining while industry and the service sector are receiving incentives and subsidies. He quoted official figures to demonstrate that the rural population predominantly engaged in single-crop, rain-fed farming shows negative growth when, the growth rate in the GDP for the country is an impressive 8 per cent.

He advised CSOs to go to the villager to understand their problems. He offered the following suggestions for poverty alleviation: -

- Increase Agriculture productivity
- Invest in water shed management
- Promote Organic farming
- Introduce secondary occupation

Being a government officer, he felt that the most serious problem before the administration today, is the absence of trustworthy and acceptable leadership in the villages and hence a sense of distrust in government officials. He believed that strong determination; commitment will necessarily get things done.

11 *Vote of thanks*

Mr. Ramesh Sangare (HRD Network) gave the vote of thanks and the two-day Peer Learning Workshop came to an end.
