

State level '**Participatory Peer-Learning Workshop**' was organized from the March 18 to 20, 2006 under the aegis of **Poorest Areas Civil Societies (PACS) Programme** by **Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan**, Chitrakoot at the **Bharat Janani Campus, Chitrakoot**. Right-to-Information, National Employment Guarantee Scheme, Campaign for Right-to-Food and many other important issues were discussed and deliberated upon during this three-day workshop. A brief account of the day-wise proceedings is given below _

Day One - Inaugural Session

The inaugural session commenced with inspiring and zestful songs rendered by the committed associates of the Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan. The workshop was formally inaugurated by Sri RK Sharma, Commissioner, Chitrakoot by lighting the lamp while Ms Kiran Sharma, National Programme Manager of PACS and Dr. Bhagwat Prasad, Chairman, Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan graced the occasion.

1. Dr. Bhagwat Prasad, Director of ABSSS, the organising CSO, welcomed the guests. He informed the gathering that Chitrakoot was not only a tribal place but was also the sacred land which was the residing abode of the Lord Sri Ram enroute to Rameshwaram during his exile. He gave a brief description of the objectives and activities of his organisation, the Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan. He extended his good wishes to the participants and hoped that they would carry back a package of renewed zeal and resolves from the workshop.
2. Sri Santosh Dwivedi, State Programme Manager of PACS made a brief presentation on updates about the PACS programme. He reminded of the Concept, Aim, Objectives, Activities and Processes of the programme. He also apprised the participants of the progress that the PACS programme has made so far. The session was followed by yet another inspiring song by the members of ABSSS.
3. Presentations on the results of the Regional Peer Learning Workshops were made by the concerned CSOs. Sri Shashi Bhusan of PANI, Faizabad provided details of the two-day Central UP RPLW, which was organized by Sarvodaya Sewa Ashram, Hardoi on February 23 & 24, 2006. He informed that Right-to-Information, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Education-for-All were the main subjects of this RPLW.

Dr. BC Srivastava of Shoharatgarh Environmental Society, the organisers of the Eastern UP RPLW held on February 26 & 27, 2006 briefed the house opportunities for livelihood, Right-to-Information and Disaster Management were discussed during the two day intervention.

Dr. Arvind Khare and Mr. Dhruva Singh Yadav of made a presentation on the Bundelkhand RPLW held on February 23 & 24, 2006 at Mahoba. They apprised the house that an integrated regional strategy on the drought and unemployment, gender discrimination and inequality for the Bundelkhand region was evolved.

4. Presentations on regional workshops were followed by an address by Commissioner Chitrakoot Division, the chief guest. In his address, Mr. Sharma, made a reference to the glorious past of Chitrakoot and then highlighted various reasons and factors responsible for the poverty of the region and the efforts being made by the state government to address these factors. He informed the audience that the government was making efforts to make infrastructures and facilities available to the region for its social development. He also made a reference to various schemes launched by the state government to augment the income of the people of the region. He expressed his hope that the PACS organisations would make visible contribution towards the economic development of the region. This was followed by a note of thanks by Sri Gopal Bhai, the source of inspiration of Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan.

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Day One - Session 2

Ms Kiran Sharma, the national programme manager of PACS, addressed the participants. She discussed various practical aspects related to the implementation of the programme. She informed the participants that PACS, being implemented in 87 districts of 6 states by 530 civil society organisations is perhaps the biggest PACS programme of the world. Under this programme, in Uttar Pradesh in 20 selected districts 48 schemes are being implemented by about 120 organisations.

She expressed concern over various problems being faced in implementation of the programme. She stressed the importance of the quality of the programme and suggested that all the associated organisations would be required to make necessary efforts to improve the quality of implementation of the programme and delivery mechanism. Even though the programme was being implemented in Uttar Pradesh in a very large scale, it has not been able to make its mark. The participating organisations will have to make serious efforts to ensure that the presence of the programme gets registered and noticed so that its message really goes across. She also suggested that the government officials should also be closely associated with the programme.

She emphasized the need for maintaining the quality of various capacity building programmes being carried out under PACS. She expressed concern over the fact that due attention was not being paid to the participants, resource persons and reference material. She informed the participants that maximum money has been allotted for advocacy and empowerment under PACS, therefore, it is expected that the quality of such activities is maintained. She expressed the hope that all the associated organizations would prepare detailed report on the training programmes in future.

Referring to MEAL under PACS, she advised the support organisations that they should approach concerned reference institution, state MEAL Coordinator and State programme manager for any kind of assistance or guidance and make use of their services.

She expressed dissatisfaction on the financial management of the support organisations. She informed the participants that during the recently held financial evaluation the state of many organisations was reported to be deplorable. She warned the organisations that the organisation which may fail to file FC3 return in future, would not be allowed to receive financial assistance from PACS. She also told them that no re-appropriation under different budget head would be allowed without the written permission of the management advisors.

She pointed out that PACS had taken an initiative in the direction of empowerment of communities but subsequent experiences show that empowerment cannot become reality unless and until the issue of livelihood is addressed properly. Right to information and National Employment Guarantee Scheme provide an excellent opportunity for us to move ahead to address the issue of livelihood. She expressed satisfaction that both these were discussed during the peer learning workshops and regional strategy was prepared. She suggested that the participating organisations should make all possible efforts to widely disseminate the provisions of these in simple language. Right to information and employment guarantee scheme should be the central themes of all future programmes. She informed the participants that a strategy for dissemination of information on Right to Information and Employment Guarantee Scheme is being developed for the implementation of which the state level media would be entrusted a very important role. She suggested that all the support organisations should adopt a village each for the ideal implementation of employment guarantee scheme. She told them that they could make necessary changes in their quarterly work plan for this.

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Day One - Session 3

Again this session also began with an inspiring song by the troupe of the organising institution.

1. Sri Bhagwat Prasad, Director, Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan, made a detailed presentation on the progress made by the institution in connection with carrying out PACS programme. He informed the participants that the institution along with its support organisations, is working in 254 villages of 7 blocks in 5 districts of Bundelkhand. Under the project, activities on the issues related to advocacy, women empowerment, self help group and local self government are being carried out amongst the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes in the region.

Making reference to many problems related to land reforms in the region, he underlined the need for the institution to work on these issues. He said that creation and struggle should go on simultaneously on the road to development. He also provided information on the achievements and efforts made by the institution in collaboration with the district administration (April 2003 to December 2005).

- Ownership documents of 1093 acre of land to 565 families
- Possession on land to 158 families
- Rupees 13.83 lakh and 153 quintal food grains to 118 labours
- Ration cards to 121 people living below poverty line
- 2244 Antyodaya cards
- 194 old age pension
- 25 disabled pension
- 215 Indira Awas
- Saving of Rs. 9.41 lakh by 214 savings groups

He also shared information about the communication material prepared by the institution on various issues.

2. On the issue of "poor and legal assistance", senior workers of Common Wealth Human Rights Law Network and People's Union for Civil Liberty and the senior advocates of Hon'ble High Court expressed their views. The participants were informed by Sri K.K. Rai that the Hon'ble High Court had secured the right to food for 40 crore people through one of its landmark judgements. He gave an example of an order issued by the Department of Forests and how in compliance thereof the scheduled tribes and other people are displaced from their parental homes and they are also deprived of their means of livelihood. He assured to provide all possible support to all participating organisations for their fight against deaths due to hunger.

Sri Anup Kumar Srivastava, Advocate, Hon'ble High Court, emphasised the need to mobilize people's organizations to get together in their fight for right to food. Active support of the media would also be required. He told the participants that even though Uttar Pradesh produces more grains than its consumption needs yet 1 of every 6 malnourished persons of the country hails from UP.

Mr Colin Gonzalvis, senior advocate Hon'ble Supreme Court, said that infringement of the people's right to water, forest and land has a direct relationship with right to food and the deaths being caused by hunger. He informed the participants that Canada and Australia have recognized the people's right to live in the forests. He also said that Public Interest Litigation could prove to be of immense help in this regard.

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Day One - Session 4

1. Sri Ashok Gopal of Info Change discussed various aspects of the PACS website. He said that this website displays information received from the support organisations. He requested the participating organisations to provide factual information on the achievements being made and issues that need to be deliberated upon so that these could be widely disseminated through this website.

He told the participants that in sending any article for the website the concerned should include background of the region (physical, social, economic, cultural), strategy for the implementation of the programme, details of the series of events (date, names, phases and faced problems) and facts and data about the outcomes achieved. The article should include the views of the local people on the following relating to any change brought about:

- How did the change take place?
- What do people think about this change?
- How would this change affect the local people?
- What do people want to do to make the change permanent?

Sri Gopal asked the participants to contact him on the following e-mail addresses _
infochange@eth.net and sghosh@devait.org

2. The last presentation of the first day was made by Sri Aditya Vidyasagar, the Chief Executive of the recently appointed Communication Resource Organisation for Uttar Pradesh, VIDYASAGAR ASSOCIATES. The highlight of his presentation was the **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PACKAGE for PACS in Uttar Pradesh**, which has been devised by him to make the programme implementation in Uttar Pradesh more effective.

This strategy is woven around the 'Action-oriented Visual Implementation Dynamics' the AVID Approach and aims at making the practice of Internal & External Communications Result-oriented and Goal-specific, and therefore, it is termed as the AVID Communications Strategy.

This multi-pronged strategy is targeted at streamlining the internal and external communications capacities of CSOs at one hand so on the other it aims at creating visibility about the PACS initiatives in the State.

The SKETCH of this Strategy revolved around the following _

- Building capacities of CSOs to foster Knowledge, Skills & Expertise Management regarding Internal & External Communications.
- Making media the PACS partners in successes & failures by providing inputs related to good practices of the Programme.
- Extending solutions to Government for gap-bridging in implementation by providing communications support to replicate the good practices.

And overall he aspired to come together as ONE-TEAM to be the TEAM-ONE among all Development Projects running in the Country.

In the CRUX of the AVID Communications Strategy lied its **OBJECTIVE** of integrating communications with development ideas & programmes, and its **PURPOSE** of co-ordinating the communications efforts to streamline internal & external communications by making them goal-specific. He stressed upon creating synergy across the target segments for making the communication result-oriented.

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Day One - Session 4 ... contd.

The salient feature of the AVID Communication Strategy proposed by Sri Vidyasagar for taking the PACS initiatives forward was its approach comprises of the following components _

SEEK: Communications Gaps, especially from CSOs.

BUILD: Team with all stakeholders.

DEVELOP: Communications Models & Content.

CREATE: Communications Systems, Communications Modules, Communications Kit, Advocacy Kit, Capacity Building kit and by creating Communications Synergy with all available media resources by forming a Round-Table and an Info-based Advocacy Cell with non-PACS Partners.

CO-ORDINATE: All communications efforts into a region and theme-specific plan.

IMPLEMENT: A test-run and an Impact Assessment of the Showcasing efforts.

ACHIEVE: Communications and Capacity Building Goals.

SHARE: Learning from the physical & intellectual resources with peers & systems, and success stories with peers and media.

SUSTAIN: Impact & Good Practices by creating replicable models.

Sri Vidyasagar provided the house with following explanations about the soul of communication

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- An observation, which results into making the other guy blink, is Communication.
- An effort, which results into a meaningful action, is Communication.
- An action, which results into co-operation, is Communication.
- A co-operation, which results into co-ordination, is Communication.
- A co-ordination, which makes the effort work for its purpose is Communication.

Sri Vidyasagar informed the participants that his organisation had made considerable progress in the following areas:

- Identification of the Communication needs for the PACS programme.
- Preparation of the module on "Communication for Results", a Capacity-building tool for strengthening communications capacities of PACS CSOs.
- Formation of the RoundTable, an informal forum with representation from Government, Corporate, Media and Social segments.
- Basic planning for disseminating the best practices of PACS programme through state, national, and satellite media.

At the end of his presentation, Sri Vidyasagar sought co-operation from CSOs to open up and share all their worries and queries pertaining to Communications of any kind. He thanked all those CSOs, who have already started doing it.

He suggested to the CSOs to volunteer for applying the NREGA and RTI replicable models test-run in their project districts through a note on "Why Your District" by April 7, 2006 through their respective ROs.

He also answered questions raised by the participants.

The activities of the first day came to an end with a cultural programme presented by the ABSSS troupe.

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Day Two

The day two of the state level peer learning and dialogue workshop started with a devotional song by Sri Gopal Bhai. This was followed by welcome of all the participants by the Sri Santosh Dwivedi, State Manager, PACS. He gave information to the participants about the proposed activities of the second day. Before the commencement of the technical sessions, Ms Asha ji presented a recap of the activities of the previous day.

Day Two - Session 1

1. The first technical session of the second day of the workshop started with a presentation Mr. Aseem Hasnain, State Coordinator MEAL. He revisited the concept, objective and process of MEAL and discussed the present state of the programme in the context of the state. There were 48 schemes sanctioned in the state out of which activities related to 45 schemes had already commenced and the commencement of the remaining 3 was proposed for April 2006. MEAL workshop have been organised under some of these schemes. However, it was a matter of concern that reports from all the organisation were not being received regularly. He hoped that all the concerned organisations would start sending their reports regularly soon.

He clarified that input-activity and process reflection report should be sent quarterly and output tracking report sixmonthly. He also explained to the participants the process of filling the newly introduced format for report on MEAL. He also discussed the process of grading the organisations and answered the questions raised by the participants.

2 Discussion on MEAL was followed by discussion on 'Right to Information'. Before the commencement of deliberations on this issue, Shanker Bhai, Girish Bhai, Priyanka Bahen of Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Rajasthan and Sri Manish Sisaudiya, Sri Ramasre and Ms Santosh emphasised the need to create an environment for the implementation of any law with the help of a very interesting puppet show.

Shankar Bhai of Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan initiated discussion on 'right to information' by talking about the long drawn struggle and historic perspective that paved the way for this law. In Rajasthan, his organisation had raised the issue related to the fundamental issues concerning minimum wages. The villagers had asked for a photocopy of the measurement book in connection with a certain dispute but the authorities had turned down their demand. With the intervention of the District Magistrate the villagers succeeded in getting the permission to make a copy of the documents with a pencil by hand. These documents revealed that whereas 40 persons had worked in the village the payment was made to 60.

Shankar Bhai said that Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan had continued its movement with regard to right to information from the government in the form of demonstrations, and protests. The first such protest lasted 40 days. The protestors remained at one place day and night and continued singing inspiring songs.

Shankar Bhai said that the villagers had made all the arrangement for meals for the workers involved in this movement. Whereas the villagers provided 1-2 Kg wheat, the other people provided financial assistance. More and more people joined the movement. The first public hearing was organised in Kota Kirana Village. Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan has organised 13 public hearings so far during which many types of malpractices have come to light. Shankar Bhai said that the government did not want social audit because the bureaucracy does not want to lose its control over any kind of information. Information related to Muster Roll, the list of people living below poverty line, list of medicines available in the hospitals and information related to food grains available in the ration shops is what is suppressed and through suppression of which the common man is exploited.

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Day Two - Session 1 ... contd.

Girish Bhai of the same organisation gave some examples and told the participants that in one case they had to make efforts for one year before the information could be obtained and that too with the intervention of the Hon'ble court. In one instance, a Sarpanch had caused a community centre to be opened in the house of a Panch. When the facts came to light the community centre was constructed again outside the house the measurements of which did not match the measurements mentioned in the layout plan. In another instance, 49 activities shown to be conducted with a cost of Rs. 77 lakh were found to be constructed only on paper and not on the ground. There was another case where the department had constructed a veterinary hospital on the first storey of a house. In an instance the concerned officers had measured and constructed the same well 4 times! Girish Bhai told the participants that it would not be enough to obtain information and documents. It would also be necessary to be able to decipher muster roll, list of people living below poverty line and other documents and also to be able to socially audit these. He also made an offer of any assistance to any peer in this regard.

Sri Sisaudia of KABIR and PARIVARTAN organisations of Delhi, actively involved with efforts to put to practice the 'right to information' gave the participants many examples of the affect and use of this law. He described in details the process of obtaining information under the provisions of this law.

The session came to a close with a group song.

Day Two - Session 2

The session started with a song, which was followed by staging of a brief comic drama 'Khazana'. This satire brought out before the participants how the bureaucracy, politician and police exploit people in general.

Following this dramatic presentation, Ms Santosh, a representative of PARIVARTAN Delhi, recounted before the participants the effort being made by this organisation in the slums of Delhi to reform the system of supply of food grains to the slum dwellers. Ms Santosh described how the volunteers of PARIVARTAN inspired the slum dwellers to invoke their right under 'right to information' and to obtain information regarding supply of food grains. The result of these efforts has been that the system of supply of food grains in many rations shops in the concerned areas improved considerably. She also told the participants that the government of Delhi had issued an order vide which the people have been conferred the right to inspect ration shops.

Mr. Ram Asre of the same organisation threw light on the efforts being made to ensure free admission of the children of poor families in private schools being run on government land. In accordance with the agreed conditions private colleges constructed on government lands were under an obligation to ensure 25% of the total admission to the poor. But this was not happening and the private institutions were not even willing to accept that they were under obligation to do so. He said that his organisation motivated people to invoke the provisions of right to information and seek information regarding admissions to public schools. These efforts yielded results and many public schools started admitting poor children free of cost as per the agreement with the government. This was followed by the screening of a documentary film on the movement against corruption being carried out by Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan.

An open session on the right to information was convened thereafter and the resources persons present answered many questions raised by the participants in connection with the provisions of this law.

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Day Two - Session 2 ... contd.**Questions related to the law on 'Right-to-Information'**

- To whom should the application be submitted under the 'Right to Information Act'?
- What type of questions should the application contain so that desired information could be obtained?
- Is there any fee required to be paid for obtaining desired information?
- When and how is this fee to be deposited?
- To whom should the application be submitted in the departments where public information officers have not been nominated?
- Where the application should be filed for obtaining information from other regions/states of the country?
- Can the noting done by the government officers in the official files be also obtained in the form of information?
- Who has the power to classify as confidential the desired information?
- From where can the information regarding encroachment of land be obtained?
- Information related to how many past years can be obtained?
- Can the concerned department respond with a one-line answer?
- Can the time limit set for obtaining desired information be increased?

The speakers made it clear to the participants that this law cannot change the whole system overnight. However, this law provides an opportunity to the common man to make a beginning for change of the situation. The participants were also advised not to try to obtain information alone on sensitive issues. For such issues many persons from different places should file applications to obtain information. Resource persons also cautioned the participants that before they start invoking the provisions of this law to obtain information from the government they will have to ensure that the working of their own organisation is clearly transparent.

Day Two - Session 3

Third session began with an inspiring song by the troupe of the organising institution

During this session discussion was facilitated on the legal provisions of 'Right to Information Act' and the process of making use of them by Sri Vainkatesh Naik of Common Wealth Human Rights Initiative. He said that democracy and economic development are dependent on transparency. He said that most of the 68 countries where the law on right to information has been passed are democratic countries. He told the participant the in South Africa, all the public and private companies are complying with this law and this has not resulted in any kind of reduction in their profits.

Sri Naik informed the participants that in India 9 states had their own right to information law prior to October 1005. From 13th October 2005, the 'right to information act' has come into force throughout the country. This law would be applicable even in those states where the state has not promulgated 'right to information' law at the state level. However, due to the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir, this law would not be applicable there. With coming in force of this law it has become necessary for every state government department as well as every central government department to nominate one officer as public information officer. He also informed the participants that Sri Wajahat Habibullah a retired government servant, has been appointed as the first Chief Information Commissioner of India and that he has already joined. The authorised website of the Information Commission of India is www.rti.gov.in.

After his presentation, Sri Vainkatesh answered the questions raised by the participants.

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Day Two - Session 3 ... contd.**'Right-to-Information Act' – Some Important Facts**

- To obtain information from a department of state government send application to the public information officer of the concerned department by post.
- For departments of the central government assistant public information officer have been nominated in the post offices of 603 districts.
- To obtain information applications can also be sent through e-mail. Information fee should be sent in the name of the concerned public information officer.
- In case the documents related to required information have not been destroyed according to law then the department would be under obligation to provide information irrespective of how old it is.
- Concerned department is bound to provide only such information as is legally available or should be legally available.
- Under the 'Right to Information Act' information related to certain special departments has been classified as confidential ab initio.
- The departments cannot respond by giving a one-line reply. The department will have to respond with as speaking reply as to why the required information is not to be made available.
- The applicant should not increase the time limit set for providing information in response to the application. The concerned department should provide maximum information within the stipulated time limit of 30 days.
- The responsibility of providing information regarding encroached land would rest with the Land Records Department of the concerned state.

Sri Bharat Dogra, who chaired the technical session on 'right to information act', in his address asked the participants to view the act in the context of overall system. Even though several laws have been passed but they have not succeeded in reducing the exploitation of the common man and corruption rampant everywhere. This law will also not act as a magic wand. All the concerned parties should act according to the spirit of the law and take balanced course of action.

Day Two - Session 4

The last session of the second day of the workshop was devoted to the 'national employment guarantee scheme'. This session, like the first one, also began with an inspiring song.

1. Sri Chandra Shekhar Pran, Regional Director, Nehru Yuva Kendra, established under the Sports and Youth Ministry of the Government of India, discussed the relevance and utility of the employment guarantee scheme and asked the participants to deliberate on the issue as to whether all the answers to the questions related to development are implicit in government schemes. Referring to the 'right to information' and 'employment guarantee scheme' he said that it appears as if the government is doing and deciding everything and the common man and society have no role to play in this regard.

He said that by merely promulgating a law the well-being the society cannot be ensured. He said that just as achievement of independence from foreign rule has not resulting in setting everything right in the same way legal enactments alone could not put an end to all its ills.

He said that every society needs some nutrients to keep going and our culture is such a nutrient. In this context he said that the role of panchayats should be determined by the people and not by the government. In the end of discussion he laid emphasis on the need to review the functioning of PACS organisations.

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Day Two - Session 4 ... contd.

- 2 Sri Sachin Jain, Coordinator, right to food movement from Bhopal continued discussion on the employment guarantee scheme and said that the journey from exploitation based economy to equity based economy has seen many ups and downs. We are now moving from agriculture based economy to market oriented economy. Sri Jain informed the participants that the opportunity for employment is not included in the fundamental rights embedded in the constitution, therefore, the governments were not bound to provide opportunities for employment.

Talking about the background of right to food movement, he said that during the 90s there was an increase in the employment opportunities in the services sector but there was decrease of opportunities in the agriculture sector. This resulted in a state of starvation in various parts of the country.

He termed the provisions of employment guarantee scheme as progressive but in view of the limitations he was of the opinion that the issue needed further deliberation and discussion to make it all embracing.

- 3 Shankar Bhai of Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan sang a Rajasthani song through which he raised questions relating the existing systems.

Shankar Bhai discussed the failure of employment guarantee during the last 30 years in the context of Maharashtra and said that the organisations associated with PACS will have to carry out their responsibilities seriously. He said that in Rajasthan, people lived through the long period of drought on the paltry assistance they obtained through 8 days of employment. In this light guarantee of 100 days of employment is nothing short of a dream come true.

The session came to an end with a special note from Sri Bharat Dogra. He said that it would be necessary to see what preparations have been made at the village level in the context of employment guarantee scheme. Who will do and get done the micro-planning? Who will decide the priorities regarding different kind of work and jobs? Whether the employment guarantee scheme would run alone or other meaningful possibilities would be associated with it in time to come? He closed his address by emphasizing the need to add the right to land and land rehabilitation to the employment guarantee scheme.

Day Three

The day three of the state level peer learning and dialogue workshop started with an inspiring song. This was followed by a recap of the proceedings of the previous day presented by Sri Manish Sisodia of PARIVARTAN, Delhi. He also briefly discussed some aspects of the 'Right to Information Act' and assured that participants of an help in this regard.

Day Three - Session 1

1. Continuing with the discussion on the national employment guarantee scheme, the resource persons expressed their views on the use of the provisions of 'right to information act' in this context. Talking about the usefulness of national employment guarantee scheme with regard to the problem of drought spread in Bundelkhand, Dr. Sanjay Vijay of Shramik Bharti, Kanpur, informed the participants that Bundelkhand gets its share of rain and floods yet still there is onslaught of drought. Due to uncertainty related to weather about 39% people migrate annually. Dr. Sanjay said that article 21 of the constitution provides for right to live. In a case the national employment guarantee scheme succeeds in reinforcing the people's right to live and also in reducing migration of people from the region, then this scheme would certainly have served its purpose as a useful programme.

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Day Three - Session 1 ... contd.

Dr. Sanjay said that in case the permission is granted under this act to the gram panchayats carry out activities related to relief for drought victims and prevention of flood, then this would certainly prove to be useful. In Uttar Pradesh, where men and women do not get the same wages for the same work, if under the employment guarantee scheme labour start getting recommended minimum wages, then this scheme would certainly prove to be helpful. In the end Dr. Sanjay emphasised the role of civil societies in facilitating micro planning at the village level for employment guarantee scheme.

2. Sri Shankar Bhai of Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan expressed his views on the employment guarantee scheme in a very simple manner. Giving an example of Rajasthan, he said that there still are many places where if people fail to go to the forest to collect wood due to illness, the children of the household may not get any food for 3 days. Under such situations this law is very good as it offers an opportunity to the poor to satiate hunger and prevent starvation. He suggested that instead of delving deep into the complexity of the concerned law, all the people should start making positive efforts to implement it effectively for the well being of society.

He said that it was a very good opportunity of associating the people with the employment guarantee scheme. He said that this law guarantees work to every adult of the village in case work is sought and case work is not sought the job card would remain blank. He asked the participants to make efforts to get all the willing people registered, get the job cards issued, help them prepare applications for asking for work, and in case they fail to get work then help be given to them so that they get the promised unemployment allowance. Civil societies under PACS can help people undertake social audit. Item-wise information regarding the following can be prepared and presented before the gram sabha/gram panchayat under social audit:

- Who was paid wages? How much was paid? For how many days?
- How many bags of cement were received? How much concrete was received? How much other material was received?
- Simplification in the local language of the measurement book.

Thought about it for 6 months – but got caught today !

A peasant once bought a Murra Buffalo whose horns were rounded and sparkling bright. He used to look after his buffalo very well and tended her every day. He would wash and rub the buffalo and also prepare nutritious food for her. Whenever the buffalo would drop its head to eat the peasant would look at her bright rounded horns and would have the desire to place his head in between. On day while the buffalo was eating the peasant did place his head between her horns. As soon as the peasant placed his head between her horns, the buffalo lifted its head. As a result the head of the peasant got caught between the horns of the buffalo. The more he tried to get his head released the more would the buffalo move its head this way and that to try to throw the peasant. This struggle caused many injuries to the peasant. All the noise attracted the attention of people and the members of the peasant's household as well neighbours came rushing and running in. With great effort they could finally succeed in controlling the buffalo and getting the head of the peasant released from the vice like hold of the horns. They asked him why did he not think at least once before placing his head between the horns of the buffalo. He said – 'Thought about it for 6 months but finally got caught today'.

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Day Three - Session 1 ... contd.

3. In the end of the session, Sri Vaintakesh Naik from Delhi, informed the audience that under the right to information act the government is bound to give information of two types:

- (a) the information the government itself wants to disseminate
- (b) the information which is to be given when demanded by the people

He also gave specific examples of the use of the provisions of the right to information in the context of employment guarantee scheme.

- (a) the information the government itself wants to disseminate
 - Names of applicants registered for getting employment?
 - What activities would the panchayat be carrying out?
 - What is minimum wage and unemployment allowance?
 - How many people were employed for how many days, for what work and where?
 - In case no employment/work could be given then why?
 - In case no payment could be made for work then why?
 - If allowance cannot be paid then why?
- (b) the information which is to be given when demanded by the people
 - How many people have filed applications?
 - Why did people not get work even after registration?
 - Why was not prior information about work made available?
 - Whether wages (60%) and material (40%) are in the right proportion?

Sri Vainkatesh also told the participants that for adequate communication of the national employment guarantee scheme the government is bound to place advertisements in the newspapers. He also informed that 1/3rd beneficiaries of the programme would be women. The wages would be paid impartially in the presence of all the people and the wage earners would be given prior information regarding the date of payment.

The resource persons answered to the participants' questions regarding both the laws.

Day Three - Session 2

1. The second session of the third day of the workshop began with the introduction of the concept of 'village resource centre', services to be provided by it and the cost of establishing it. Sri Onmoi Ranjan of Tarahat, Orcha promised to provide all assistance and help to any support organisation in establishing 'village resource centre'. This presentation was followed by queries from the participants which were responded to by Sri Ranjan. The queries were mostly concerned about the cost of establishing the resource centre, security money to be submitted to Tarahat, other fees and the income from the centre.
2. Sachin Jain, from Bhopal, recommenced discussion on a very important issue of today concerning right to food movement. He emphasised the need to take the movement ahead to ensure that even the poorest of the poor get minimum food.

Sri Gangabhai from Chhattisgarh, talking about the importance of the right to food movement, said that this movement helped mobilize the Pahari Korba tribe of Chhattisgarh. In the wake of this movement there was enhancement of information and knowledge about issues related to various aspects of the lives of the tribal and some authorities were also created. He said that the Pahari Korba got the Antyodaya Card and midday meal was started in their region.

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Day Three - Session 2 ... contd.

Bringing to a close the discussion on the right to food, senior journalist Sri Bharat Dogra drew the attention of the participants on the four most essential elements of the right to food movement:

- (a) The need for sustainable thinking about food security – fertility of the soil, water conservation and forest conservation etc.
- (b) People should get food security out of their own income – facilities of irrigation of land, land reforms etc.
- (c) Quality of food grains – use of pesticides and fertilizers etc.
- (d) Food is right of all living beings.

Sri Dogra said that in this fight against hunger full dependence on the Hon'ble Supreme Court is not wise. He told the participants that about 1 crore children die of starvation and malnutrition every year worldwide. Out of these every 6th child belongs to India but the government and the people at the helm of affairs are not willing to accept this fact.

Closing his discourse, Sri Dogra said that the right to food should be linked with continuous livelihood if this movement is to succeed. This movement will also have to be linked with land reforms.

- 3 In the next session an interesting presentation was made by Resource Alliance and Business Community Foundation on the issue of freedom from dependence on government subsidy and financial assistance as well as march towards financial self reliance. Major Sandhu of Resource Alliance, in his presentation said that collecting money for carrying out activities is itself an art. He discussed in detail the concept and process and the need to adopt these. With the help of data, Major Sandhu explained why the common man considers donations to be right and why the common man does not want to pay anything for public activities. He said that about 74% of all the money collected for public activities is contributed by the common man.

Day Three - Session 3

Advisor to the Hon'ble Supreme Court, Sri IC Dwivedi presided over the proceedings of the last session. Sri Sandeep Majhi of Proact, made a presentation on the proceedings of the three-day workshop before the Chief Guest. Before the valedictory address by the Chief Guest, Sri Gopal Bhai of Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan introduced the virtues of the Chief Guest through the rendition of a song.

Sri Dwivedi told the participants that the investigation of an offence in fact is the search for truth. And search of truth is the highest work. Making a statement with out a thorough examination of facts is wrong, he therefore, exhorted the members of all the civil societies to assess themselves before judging the act of others. He further told the participants that the Hon'ble Supreme Court had granted the right to question the working of the central as well as the state governments to all countrymen alike. This establishes the importance of the Right-to-Information.

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