

A Consultation for multi-stakeholder partnership on “Empowerment for Livelihoods: State policy, Private initiatives and Civil Society Action” for Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme

Since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000, the MDGs have become the most widely accepted yardstick of development efforts by government, donors, civil society organizations and other stakeholders concerned with sustainable human development. The MDGs are a set of numerical and time-bound targets related to critical achievements and socio-economic and environmental ethos of humankind. They include halving income poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education and gender equality; reducing infant and child mortality by three quarters; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS; and halving the proportion of people without access to safe water. These targets are to be achieved by 2015. Almost all the countries in the world, including India, have committed themselves to attaining the targets embodied in the Millennium Declaration by 2015. India has halved the number of its people below poverty line in the last twenty years. However, around 350 million people still remain below the international measure of US\$1/day PPP. The Government of India has paid considerable attention to the development challenge in India and has identified four priority themes to take this forward: high economic growth, equitable growth and social justice, human development, and a crosscutting theme of reform and governance.¹ (www.dfid.gov.uk)

Poverty, a resultant of rampant unemployment and underemployment is the single biggest challenge facing India. As per the government figures the Human Development Index value of India is 47% (NHDR 2001) and although the incidence of poverty in the country has dropped yet the Human Development Report indicates that there are still more than

- 260 million Indians, struggling below the poverty line;
- Around 80 million do not have enough food;
- Millions more lack adequate shelter, clothing and access to health and education facilities.

The Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) program funded by the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID) aims to reduce poverty through a long term and sustainable process, which uniquely build Organizational Capacities (O.D.) at the same time. The Planning commission, Government of India, along with DFID initially identified 100 districts in India, judged to be the “poorest” on the basis of identified socio-economic indicators. The geographical coverage of the PACS Programme is in the extremely backward regions of central and eastern India spanning six states: Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand. Initially UP had 16 districts which after bifurcation have gone up to 20 districts.

Why Uttar Pradesh is under PACS coverage?

Uttar Pradesh has high levels of poverty in comparison to other Indian states, and the progress has been uneven over the past decade, and UP still lags behind many other states in combating poverty. There are still 31.15% people in UP living below the poverty line (Planning commission 99-00). Uttar Pradesh has been consistent in registering at the bottom of HPI and HDI, the Human development index value 2001 for UP is .388 (HDI India - .472) while the Human poverty Index 1991 is 48.27 (HPI India – 39.36).^(NHDR 2001)

In view of potentials of PACS programmes, the CSOs of UP are offered an immensely enabling opportunity opened with a huge opportunity to redefine UP’s HPI enabling the poorest communities it is targeting to access and realize entitlements meant for eradicating their own marginalization.

The Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme is being managed by two consultants – Development Alternatives for programmatic issues and Price water house coopers for financial and operational concerns. Routing this intervention through Civil Society was deliberate, as it sought to empower the poor at the grassroots especially where the reach of government and markets was

limited.

The Consultation: Goal and Objectives

EMPOWERMENT FOR LIVELIHOODS: STATE POLICY, PRIVATE INITIATIVES AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION

A strategic design has been prepared for operationalising advocacy, livelihood support and capacity building opportunities for the poor, to ensure sustainability of the efforts along with the enhancement of the impact of the programme during the tenure of the project. There now, exists an opportune environment for promoting advocacy initiatives for livelihoods by involving all the stakeholders for a collaborative effort that would lead towards wider reach and long term impact of the initiatives.

The PACS management unit through this Consultation is providing a platform to different stakeholders for exploring possibilities for sustainable livelihood mechanisms. This would provide a learning opportunity for Civil Society Organizations to:

- develop a mutually shared perspective and identify developmental issues within the framework of Livelihood Security;
- explore innovative approaches and successful examples that inspire models/processes for feasible replication;
- to take a critical look at government policies, private initiatives, financial resources/regulations, media support and support of donors and strategies adopted by civil society organizations to address issues that affect Livelihood Security for the poor and also help to access basic services for improving the quality of their lives.

The state level consultation in Uttar Pradesh is scheduled on 22nd and 23rd September 2005 of PACS partners who will define their own strategies and bring out a Joint Declaration “Saajha Sankalp”. The two day consultation will be followed by a peer learning workshop on 24th September 2005.

Poverty in Uttar Pradesh

Poverty indicators

Development ranking of districts of Uttar Pradesh

Based upon composite development indices of the UP development Report – 2000, All the districts of Uttar Pradesh, regions wise have been ranked into four categories, (i) developed, (ii) moderately developed, (iii) less developed and (iv) backward districts, in accordance with the level of urbanization, industrialization and economic infrastructure. The backward districts require a broad rather than a narrow approach towards development. (see annex for development ranking of regions of UP)

PACS in Uttar Pradesh

Coverage

Uttar Pradesh is one of the first states to initiate the PACS programme. The programme is operational in 20 districts wherein intervention is being done in 93 blocks through 36 projects having 94 implementing partners. A total of 2535 villages in 1250 Gram Panchayats are covered by the programme.

Issues and Themes

PACs programme has five prominent themes- Local Self Governance (LSG), Women Empowerment (WE), Self Help (SH), Policy Advocacy (PA) and Social Cohesion (SC). The theme of livelihoods is being added as a stand alone one but hitherto it was considered under women empowerment or self help, however it remained a weak area till now. In UP there are 20 projects that are working on more than one theme simultaneously and only 11 that are

working on one theme or the other. Clearly indicating that CSOs think it is a better strategy to work on a combination of themes rather than on one alone. Social Cohesion is one theme that has been taken up by only one CSO – The BETI FOUNDATION.

Activities

Inputs in the PACS programme can be broadly categorized into 7 categories where 75 different types of activities are being implemented besides the concentrated efforts of capacity building through various partners. The activities are taking place under the following sub-groups:

1. Inputs for awareness generation - This includes orientation and awareness camps, meeting sammelans, and rallies camps on thematic concerns of the program.
2. Carrying out IEC activities - The IEC activities are a regular part of all activities being carried out by different partners and include wall writings, poster, puppet and video shows, news letters, “nukkkad nataks”, camps, etc.
3. Capacity building of community level institutions - On the front of Capacity building, two strategies are being adopted i.e. community based training involving community based volunteers and representatives of various community based institutions and training of project staff both at the lead and the partner CSO level.
4. Community level activities - Prominent community based activities are conducting baseline surveys, formation and strengthening SHGs through its bank linkages, federation of the groups, developing pressure groups, activating PRIs, micro planning, focusing on health issues and convergence with the government functionaries through interface workshops/events etc, besides various CSO specific issues like land rights, preparing women for pRI elections etc.
5. Advocacy and lobbying - This category is limited to a few CSOs who have taken up activities like Jan sunwai, media involvement and use of federations as the tool for advocating rights for the poor.
6. Interface with government convergence – through gram Panchayat, Nayaya Panchayat, Block, district, region, State and National functionaries.
7. Review- takes place at village, block, district, region, state and national level.

Capacity building

PACS programme has lot of focus on capacity building at different level including that of community and staff members of CSOs. Trainings have been conducted for both the project team and community level institutions which include different activities on topics like education, livelihood, training of adolescent girls/young women on legal literacy, RCH, Family Life Education, social cohesion and deepening democracy. A recent important training was on organizational governance with focus on quality, credibility and transparency concerns.

Learning Forums – These forums serve as a platform for various PACS partners to interact and learn from each other’s project and progress, and, to sharpen their own perspective on the development issues of the specific region through interactive process and a cross learning opportunity. The workshops lay down a clear vision of the path of progression for systematic development of project implementation processes.

Gender

The Patriarchal system in Uttar Pradesh has a diverse range of gender issue but have a similar social cultural construct. As Gender is being addressed as an overarching concern in all programmes, so there should be greater specificity and focus which address basic issues rather than apparent symptoms. There should be more thrust on socio-cultural fabric influencing gender discrimination and stereotypes with regard to women in society.

Networking

The PACS programme in Uttar Pradesh has more than 20 networks of CSOs. CSOs have come forward to work under a network -

- a) To include CSOs having strong local base, but not eligible to join PACS programme

- independently as per the norms for getting funds under PACS
- b) Have come forward to work on some thematic issues together with some lead organization
 - c) Promoting regional issues collectively under leadership of established CSO
 - d) Being part of existing networks of national level CSOs

The major themes covered by network partners are Local Self Governance, Womens' Empowerment, Self help initiatives, Livelihoods and Policy advocacy. Only one partner is working on the issue of social cohesion. The network and the partners share a close knit relation and commitment to the cause they are working on. Very few networks are women headed and they are actively taking up women issues, while a lot still needs to be done on gender issues in the network. *Way forward* -The network should be strengthened and should share common concerns within themselves. Negotiating, implementation and documentation skills should be adequate so networks have Project Management Evaluation and Learning through well documented and verifiable reporting systems.

Information access and Advocacy

PACS provides an opportunity to the marginalised to express their apprehensions, oppressions fears and grievances in the forum. This has been a priority of organisations working on the issue and also of the networks to effectively take up the problems and approach the change makers. The issues being taken up for advocacy in Uttar Pradesh are women rights, land rights, PRI rights and entitlements.

Entitlements

PACS has initiated a process of realization of entitlements. Women groups in the project provide a ground for members for realizing entitlements, accessing credit, solving the cases of domestic violence and raising their concerns unanimously in a democratic framework, initiated micro enterprise and income generation activities. At the village level interventions with Local Self Governance pertaining to minimum wages, panchayat committees are in various states of activation and delivery of social security schemes, village level micro plans are being evolved.

Responsibility of various stakeholders in the PACS program

Government: The constitution of India in its preamble states that WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; reflecting its social obligation as a social service provider.

Corporate: Corporate social relationship (CSR) can be defined as, "an obligation of organizations to act in ways that serve both their own interests and the interest of their many external public" (www.visionconsultingindia.com). A business cannot succeed in a society which fails, so it is the duty of a corporate to be responsible towards the society from which it derives its profit. The social responsibility could include ecology and environmental quality, consumerism, corporate giving, minorities and disadvantaged persons, labour relations, stockholder relations, and economic activities or other need responsive interventions.

Media: Media plays a lead role taking an issue to the hearts' of the people while playing a catalytic role of societal conscience keeper. It is one of the strongest medium of dissemination of information that could reach people living in the remotest of area and could impact on their thinking and ways of looking at the world. The Karnataka Media Academy chairman Mr. Arjuna Dev (Deccan Herald, Nov 2, 2004, Shimoga) has cautioned against being limited to yellow journalism. He further added that media should shoulder social responsibility and print and television media should work to compliment each other.

Financial institutions: In order to provide a sound economic base to the programmes and projects for social development, support from financial institutions provides the key for new initiatives and

also an opportunity of saving and investment by the poor in different areas of intervention. In order to fulfill their social commitment, these institutions should come forward with new schemes and plans and join other stakeholders to serve the poorest of poor in Uttar Pradesh.

Donors- U.N., Multilateral and Bilateral agencies have specific missions and strategies and wide geographical areas of coverage. Thus networking between them can be most beneficial in enhancing impact.

The cornerstone of the consultation on “State policy, Private initiatives and Civil Society Action for Livelihoods” is that through common understanding and jointly agreed upon issues of collaboration, a joint agreement could be declared for collaborative action in the project areas covered by PACS Uttar Pradesh. This would be declared through a “Saajha Sankalp” on the second day, after the completion of the consultation.