

State level Initiatives under PACS Programme

In addition to routine project activities, PACS have taken many initiatives at state programme level.

Jharkhand Swashasan Manch:

The *Jharkhand Swashasan Manch* was constituted on 17th March 2004 at *Deoghar* during 2nd PLW, and a core team of 10 members was formed to initiate the activities of JSM.

Mission of the forum is to ensure the rights of marginalized people on natural resources and women empowerment through proper function of local self-governance in the state. It was also decided that the forum would be used for advocacy on the LSG with the emphasis on following.

- Sensitization of masses on for PRI and mass rally and movement
- Advocacy at central and state level for PRI election in the state
- Utilizing media for ensuring pro-people policy in the state
- Educating the probable potential women / marginalized people for participation and leadership in the PRI election
- Post election activities at state level for improved local self-governance functioning.

Many steps were taken for strategy formulation including preparation of byelaws and issue identification. The forum had also started its activities with enthusiasm and many efforts like formation of district level network including non PACS partners, press conferences in district and letter writing to peoples representatives and political parties for PRIs were made.

The activities of the forum were affected due to financial constraints for approximately 6 months. On the initiatives from MIT, core group of JSM took stock of the situation and decided to reactivate the forum. However, this time it was felt that agenda now should be governance and entitlements.

In the view of above various issue related to social audit were discussed in details during the 4th PLW in *Hazaribag*. It emerged from the mix response from the representatives participants need more time to make any opinion on the issue.

It was decided to discuss this issue on cluster level again. Cluster level meeting were held in all three cluster in the month of April 05, to form opinion and discuss cluster level issues. A state level meeting of all the representative from the cluster was held on 21st may in *Ranchi* where all the issues and apprehensions were brought for deliberation.

House was of view that there should be two steps in social audit process one, collection of information, and two actual social audits by *gramsabhas*. Representatives also acknowledged the fact that each CSO may not be in position to carry out actual social audits but all CSOs can participate and contribute in the process by way of ground level information collection. The information thus collected can be utilized for social audits and for reporting to Supreme courts in September. Following decisions were taken in the meeting.

- As food security is burning issue and JSM have guidance of Advisor of SC commissioner on 8 social security schemes, PDS shops related issue will be taken for information collection and social audits in sample villages of selected blocks.
- Orientation on concept and methodology will be arranged for all.
- After the information is collected and analyzed further action plan would be prepared on the bases of need and willingness.
- Forum will keep eye on the happenings related to PRI election and response in appropriate manner as per the situation.

Peer Learning Workshops:

So far 4 peer learning workshops have organized.

- 1st Peer learning workshop: The first Peer learning workshop was conducted in Ranchi on 1st and 2nd August 03 at Ranchi.
- 2nd Peer learning workshop was organized at Deoghar on 16th and 17th March-04
- 3rd Peer leaning workshop was organized in Ranchi on 7th, 8th and 9th September-04.
- 4th Peer learning workshop was organized at Hazaribag on 10th, 12th and 12th march-05.

Cross Visits:

The purpose behind organizing cross visits was to gain from the work experiences and expenses of the other CSOs. The aim behind the visit was also to organize to facilitate a larger consolidated action by the PACS supported CSOs.

The cross visits are linked with the event of PLW and managed at cluster level under the coordination of one CSOs in each cluster. Sharing of experience and finding is done during Peer Learning Workshop.

1st Cross visit:

This was made in August -September-04. The main focus was on understanding uniqueness of the intervention and best practices. Interaction with community staff, study of the documents and field visits to the project villages were.

Findings:

- The system of networking is helping in better implementation of the projects. Capacity building and organizational developmental initiatives have helped small CSOs (and partners).
- Accessibility to government schemes and linkages with government offices/department particularly at block level.
- Suggested that apart from achievements there was also a need for introspection wherein one could dwell upon what need to be done and yet could not be accomplished.
- Social Interaction has increased
- Information dissemination on various issues like legal aid, government schemes, discrimination and entrepreneurship.

2nd Cross visit:

These visits were organized in February-05 and findings were shared during the 4th Peer learning workshop at Hazaribag. This time more focus was on understanding impact and leverage of opportunities created due to project efforts.

Findings:

- Findings of the visit indicate that women participation is improving in development process. Now group / federation of women frequently interacting with government officials as their confidence level has been increased and also mobilizing construction work from the Govt. department.
- Few groups and individual (group member) have started IGAs and have mobilized resources from other agencies.

- Communities' awareness level has increased on issues like entitlement and gender equality
- Participation of Groups/ Mandals has increased in the village level meetings. SHGs got an identity of pressure group at different level.
- Livelihood Group members have shifted from non farm-to farm based activities.
- Several CSOs / network partner are playing critical role in establishing linkages between groups and financial institutions/ government.
- Quality of life has been improved of the community specifically those who directly benefited from the programme.
- CBOs have started raising their voices against the social problem, traditional self-governance system is reviving and get strengthen that is Pargana System and leadership quality has been developed among the group members. Now community has demanding more information.
- It is general feeling that the cross visits have brought about a feeling of collectiveness among the partners, as all the CSOs were taking more responsibility during the event.
- The cross visits and its sharing also brought into light, how earning a means of livelihood was a major issue among the people, who had little or no time to devote to other issues However many of the view that that apart from achievements there is also a need for introspection wherein one could dwell upon what need to be done and yet could not be accomplished.

Share Fair:

- This event is included as part of the PLW form 3rd PLW. The object of this presentation is to inform the participants about the ideas, strategies, and programme details of the CSOs. This idea is vary much appreciated by all as apart from learning it also added colour to the whole PLW.
- From share fair of 4th PLW two more dimensions are added to this event. First, apart from project details, products made by CBO were also displayed on the various stalls. Second, the event was made competitive.

Monitoring Learning and Evaluation (MEAL):

- MEAL framework was evolved after great deal of consultative process. A pilot testing for the MEAL was done in the month of

August 2004 in 3 CSOs in the state. In view of the State core groups decision on 4th August-04 the MEAL concept was shared with all CSO during 3rd Peer learning workshop on 8th September-04, and an up-scaling plan was also prepared with consultation with CSOs.

- Phase-1 of the MEAL up scale was started on 20th September-04 and completed on 12 January-05 all 16 projects / lead CSOs (and all networks)

Phase-1:

MIT adopted two different approaches. One team preferred to begin with organizational and project goals and then sensitisation of all participants to achieve them effectively. In the course alignment of outputs, indicators, processes were carried out for efficiency and measurability.

Another team introduced concept of project milestones first and then proceeds on process, activities through detailed discussions. During the process common understanding and refinement of the project deliverables were also done.

Some general norms followed by the MIT:

- Right from the beginning approach of the MEAL team was to learn and to understand the situation, project. Therefore special care was taken by providing space for participation during the whole process. Issues, concerns and suggestions were noted attentively.
- To keep the focus of the process at the pace so that all participants at CSOs can participate in the discussions and can understand the project and process.
- To facilitate two-way communication, lecturing and instructing was avoided. At many occasions participants were encouraged, challenged, and even provoked by asking questions/counter questions.
- Formal methods like lectures, OHP presentations, were avoided. Group work, blackboard, charts, and experience sharing were also used.
- As MEAL impasses on learning and sharing team followed principle of no faultfinding/ blaming throughout the process.
- To facilitate common understanding of process and project team tried to avoid discussions related finance and administration.

Milestone and process, activity / input report, social context, and output tracking were discussed in the details, during the 4-5 days at each MEAL workshop at each CSO. Formulation for process guideline and revisiting of the project outputs and LFA was also done with the all participants.

Phase-2:

In this phase, Community based impact assessment is taken. CBIA is an endeavour to understand community's perception on development, organization and project for better project strategies.

Some of the Challenges we faced and overcome during the MEAL upscale:

- Creating and maintaining environment of participation and learning among all levels of staff / functionaries.
- Working at learners' pace how to keep the speed and level of process such, where average participants feel comfortable to contribute or to raise questions / issues.
- Creating mutual trust that nobody is teaching or monitoring.
- Length of discussions, inputs Vis a Vis task / time management.

Some challenges faced during phase-2

- Participants numbers and varied level of understanding
- Selection of villages
- Mind set of community
- Mind set of CSO (Project holder & Field staff)
- Looking beyond project
- Facilitation skills (in field) and documentation
- Analytical skills

MIT's Satisfaction:

- Common understanding of project and its deliverables (realistic outputs) at all levels would lead to more focused work approach. Guidelines for self-monitoring and action plan for corrective action are prepared.
- MEAL has initiated the collective thinking process in organized manner. Now CSO teams are sensitized for more analytical approach towards other stakeholders. It has again initiated thought process within CSOs on project expectations and quality management.
- Synergy at all levels (including ROs, development alternative and CSOs).

- Establishment of the fact that each individual in the organization / project can make valuable contributes irrespective of her / his experience or the post.

Learnings:

- Questioning (why, how, what) is basic tool for initiating process. During facilitation solutions / understanding / decisions should not be given ready-made, but they should be emerging during discussions.
- Most of the project team members are hard working but as they get rare opportunity to know and understand project, they pursue activities only. Therefore, orientation of the project teams on aims and methods of performing activities was required.

Constraints:

- Most of the time was spent on the fine-tuning of outputs, indicators and finalizing steps / process for the project activities. Therefore, less time was available for discussion on present status & preparing action plan.
- Varied level of information and understanding related to project, among the participants.
- Unavailability of present field information/ baseline on indicators.
- Budgetary constraint for carrying out the CBIA in other villages.

As on 30th June MEAL up scaling for phase –I is completed in all 20(including orientation projects) CSOs projects and phase-2 in 12 CSO projects. CSOs have accepted the exercise / process with open mind and therefore, MIT could generate good cooperation and energetic response from all participants during the process.

After MEAL up- scale almost all project have refined LFAs with clearly defined outputs and realistic measurable indicators. CSOs teams are sensitised on the issue like external environment, quality process and purpose behind carrying-out activities. One can hope that learning generated through collective reflection and introspection processes, project related work would be more focused and effective. This exercise of MEAL up scaling has also provided us opportunity to understand ground realities and expectation of the communities and CSO teams.

MEAL based quarterly reporting is started from all CSOs. Quality of the reports in December-04 quarter was not as desired, cluster level /

individual meetings organized for feedback and process of the reporting was explained again.

For the month of March/ April, representatives of the MIT visited to most of the CSOs during their quarterly meeting for hand holding support. This endeavor is yielding some results, which is reflecting in the improvement in the quality of reports to the some extent.