



Bihar Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan

Workshop 5th-6th January 2006

Poorest Areas Civil Society Program

Management Consultants



Development Alternatives



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good governance has remained aloof in Bihar both at the state and local level for decades. At the local level, the Panchayati Raj Institutions constituted especially for good governance have not been efficiently functioning for the betterment of the poor. The schemes and the benefits seldom reach the needy. One of the most important reasons for this malfunctioning has been the lack of awareness among the people about the Panchayati Raj. Recently the state government has announced the election of Panchayati Raj in April 2006 providing an opportunity to bring good governance through the selection of right candidates by proper awareness of the villagers.

To utilize this opportunity for strengthening the Panchayati Raj and in turn intensify the development process in Bihar, PACS-Bihar has planned an extensive awareness campaign named **Bihar Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan**. It should be noted that many of the PACS partners in Bihar have been working in this theme for the past four years. The current Abhiyan is an intensification and orientation of their activities towards the Panchayat elections. Since the government has announced the elections on party lines, most of the activities of PACS would focus on the awareness generation of the poor and marginalized. It would not touch upon the aspects of facilitating in selection of the candidates or their capacity building.

To work out a strategy on how to build the required environment for the Panchayat election, a two-day work shop was conducted with all the 84 CSO partners, State Based Resource Organizations and MC, in the premises of Nav Jyoti Niketan, Patna on the 5th and 6th of January 2006. The entire partner CSOs, the Ros and consultants shared their ideas on making this abhiyan a success.

Mr. Rakesh Jha, the state manager of PACS-Bihar, initiated the workshop by highlighting the objectives of the workshop. After a brief introduction, Mrs Kiran Sharma spoke on the role of PACS and the probable role of it in the coming panchayat elections. She introduced Mr. Om Prakash as the convener of this Abhiyan. Mr. Om prakash presented his views on this Abhiyan and invited suggestions from all the CSOs in the workshop. After this Mr. Sandeep Manjhi from UP shared his views on the strategy of PACS-UP in the PRI election in that state. In the second half Mr. Narendra Narayan Yadav, the Panchayat Minister, spoke on the role of Panchayat in the Bihar's development. He refrained from disclosing or speaking on why the elections were proposed on party lines, however, he assured that the government would provide all possible help to the PACS initiative. After his brief speech all the CSOs grouped into 5 clusters, made strategies for their respective clusters and presented in the house. House was kept open for queries and suggestions.

The second day started with Mr. Sandeep Manjhi who gave a power point presentation on the strategy in UP elections. Thereafter, Mr. OM Prakash presented the strategy of the over all Abhiyan drawing suggestions from the presentation of the CSOs a day before. After that the CSOs were asked to group in the same way and present a point wise analysis of the activities, the outputs and the indicators, after which Mr. Om Prakash with the help of Ros

finalized the strategy. During the workshop all the participants decided to give a memorandum to the government consisting of suggestion on the Panchayat elections. At the end Mr. Rakesh Jha briefed upon the help MC would provide to the CSOs and gave the vote of thanks.

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2. WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Welcoming of Guests and Introduction

Mr. Rakesh Jha welcomed the guests and outlined the agenda of the workshop. *The initial strategy of the Abhiyan was two-pronged: one focusing on awareness generation of the poor and second on the selection, promotion and capacity building of the candidates.* However, owing to the decision of the Government to conduct the Panchayat elections on Party lines, the role of the Abhiyan would now primarily focus on environment building through extensive awareness generation. There would be a core committee at the state level that would guide and supervise the whole Abhiyan. The CSOs would decide on the kind of activities, which would be analyzed by the core committee and responsibilities would be fixed. The objective of the seminar is to facilitate in pin pointing the strategy and activities so that a date calendar can be made and responsibilities can be assigned.

PACS and Panchayati Raj

Mrs Kiran Shara started with the enquiry on the number of women participants in the house. Their low presence was quite apparent. She strictly advised the CSOs to increase the presence if they talk about the role of women in Panchayati Raj. Many CSO partners have been working on Panchayati Raj through their PACS sanctioned projects. This would provide an added advantage to this whole campaign. **She also advised the CSOs on not to engage themselves with party politics in this election.** She assured that MC would provide all the necessary help to make this abhiyan a success. Citing the example of UP where PACs played an important role in the elections, she said that PACS Bihar could play even more significant role, which will have a long-term impact on accentuating the process of development. She also emphasized on improving the documentation of the CSOs. She introduced OM Prakash, as the convener of Bihar Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan.

Brief outline of Bihar Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan

Mr. Om Prakash expressed his gratitude for being appointed as the convener. He reiterated the fact that NGOs should not indulge into party politics in this election. **The focus of the Abhiyan would be on making the marginalized community and women aware of their rights, the responsibilities of PRI, the voting system, privileges given to the marginalized and women candidates in this election, etc.** A state core committee has already been made in this regard. We need to finalize the whole strategy and activities of this Abhiyan by sharing our views.

Experience Sharing – UP Panchayat elections

Mr. Sandeep Manjhi elaborated upon the experience of PACS in UP. In UP the elections were not held in the party lines however, the whole campaign focused on awareness generation. UP 2005 panchayat elections were held in all 5208 Panchayats. The PACs partners adopted an innovative approach. They postponed activities of that quarter that were not relevant in that period and postponed the relevant activities of the next quarter. PACS intervention also ensured a peaceful election in UP.

The strategy of UP Panchayat election was built on five Stages.

1. The first stage consisted of forming committees at the state, district and block and Panchayat level and their interaction for building a proper strategy
2. Second stage consisted of establishing networks with other agencies
3. In the third stage the staffs were trained
4. In the fourth stage awareness program were implemented
5. The fifth stage consisted of providing guidance and helping the government agencies ensuring peaceful election at the time of voting.

Under this strategy the activities were designed to create awareness generation among the poor. Some of the activities were: forming committee at the state level to guide the program, training the trainers at the district level, coordinating with the government's panchayat department, media sensitization, IEC material development, radio jingles, establishing help line, etc. All the activities and proceedings were properly documented. The campaign was led with the help of *women SHGs* and other women groups/organizations, *Dalit organizations* and the *Youth*.

In retrospect, the awareness materials and the meetings at the village level were extremely successful. Besides, the establishment of Suchna Kendra was also extremely helpful to the poor. (for details see annexure)

Experience Sharing by CSOs of Bihar

Several CSOs working on PRI since long, shared their experience with the house. Those who had worked for the previous election emphasized on the role of *Suchna Kendras* and targeting the most marginalized, who generally get left out from the whole election process. Some CSOs gave the examples of SHG's role in their project areas; how they were successful in ousting the corrupt PDS distributors, how they forced the Mukhiya to implement government schemes, etc. They emphasized on utilizing the potential of *SHGs* and other groups in the coming elections.

Speech by Narendra Narayan Yadav

Mr. Yadav arrived after lunch on the first day of the workshop. Mrs Kiran Sharma briefed him about the PACS program in Bihar and about the Bihar Sashaktikaran Abhiyan and requested him to express his suggestions on making it successful. Mr. Yadav appreciated the move undertaken by PACS in the forthcoming elections. He agreed that the panchayats are the significant unit of development however they have been under performing because of the influence of powerful people and also because of lack of proper awareness among the poor. *He assured to help the Abhiyan in whatever way possible.* However, he refrained on divulging on the reasons for conducting the elections on Party lines or anything related to it.

Group Presentation

Five groups of CSOs made the presentation in front of the house on strategy and activities for this Abhiyan. On the basis of the the responsibilities and the activities mentioned in the following presentation, the Abhiyan Coordinator with the support of the core team would

prepare and share a date calendar of the activities with clear demarcation of the responsibilities and activities.

1. Gaya cluster (Magadh -1)

Coordinator of the cluster: Om Satyam- Samanvay Tirth or Shivadhar Rai- Jai Prabha Vkas Samiti
Secretariat – Gaya or Bhojpur

Strategy

- Unit: Block
- Core group of PACS partners, RO, DA should have the overall responsibility of coordinating the campaign; It should also have representatives from GO
- If possible a regional level committee should be formed
- District committee
- Block Committee comprising PACS partners, Non PACS partners and GO representatives

Awareness programmes

- Kala Jhatha – formation & orientation
- Articles, Learning materials
- Pad yatra
- Ward level meeting
- Cadre level training – potential candidates
- Coordination with GO – Booth committee
- Information on reserved seats and its proper follow-up
- PIC – specific role during electoral processes

2. Jamui & Banka Cluster (Ang cluster)

Coordinator of the cluster: Sudhir jee-Seva Bharti
Secretariat – At Jasidih

Activities

- Identification of potential candidates
- Mass awareness
- Monthly meetings
- Villagers trainings
- TOT
- IEC material dev. & distribution
- Booth samiti formation
- Mobilization through SHGs
- Unit - Panchayat
- Intervention in only those panchayat where PACS projects are being run

- Advocacy programme – the CORE committee should basically take up this aspect & work in close coordination with the district & block level committees

3. Muzaffarpur cluster (Tirhut)

*Coordinator of the cluster – Bijoy jee – Kanchan Seva Ashram
Secretariat – Muzaffarpur*

Strategy

- SHG as the base for targeting campaign activities
- Women as the central focus
- For the poor areas
- Keeping in mind the major objectives of PACS

Activities

- Training to all the field level staff
- Voter Awareness campaign– orientation, workshop
- Dummy polling exercise
- Awareness regarding the qualities of PRI representation – community sensitization
- Field workers as mobile volunteers
- Information center at block – relation with block level election office

Material Development

- Audio/video/CDs
- Flip charts – usage of existing charts & developing new charts
- Posters/Banners/Booklets
- Copy of all election related formats & its availability at information centers
- Training materials

4. Nawada cluster (Magadh-2)

*Coordinator of the cluster: Vashisth jee, NBSKPK
Secretariat- Pawapuri*

Activities

- Voters Awareness campaign
- Unit: Block
- Poster/pamphlets
- Information center
- Nukkad Natak
- Common Platform – for debate among all the contesting candidates
- Training of field workers/Volunteers
- Interface with GO

- Communication with Election Commission through CORE committee. Some legal status allocation from the commission

5. Madhubani Cluster (Mithila)

Coordinator of the cluster: Santosh jee
Secretariat – Sabarsa

Activities

- Committee formation: Cluster, District, Block and Panchayat level
- Awareness programme
- IEC material development & distribution
- Samvad yatra
- Video show
- Shanti-doot
- Workshop, training, orientation
- Information dissemination center
- Common platform

Activities-Output –Indicators (filtered from the CSOs presentation)

Following activities, Outputs and Indicators came out during the second round of presentation

Activities

Voters awareness on PRI
 Information center
 Awareness generation
 Activities at the time of election
 Leader identification
 Structure building

Output

Increase in the polling of women Dalits and marginalized
 Increase in the number of women candidates and from the marginalized communities for the election
 Increase in voting percentage
 Increase in the number of elected women and Dalits from general seat
 Peaceful voting
 More consensus candidate

Indicators

Media report
 Documentation –Photographs, success stories, daily reports of staffs, etc
 Panchayat and other records, etc

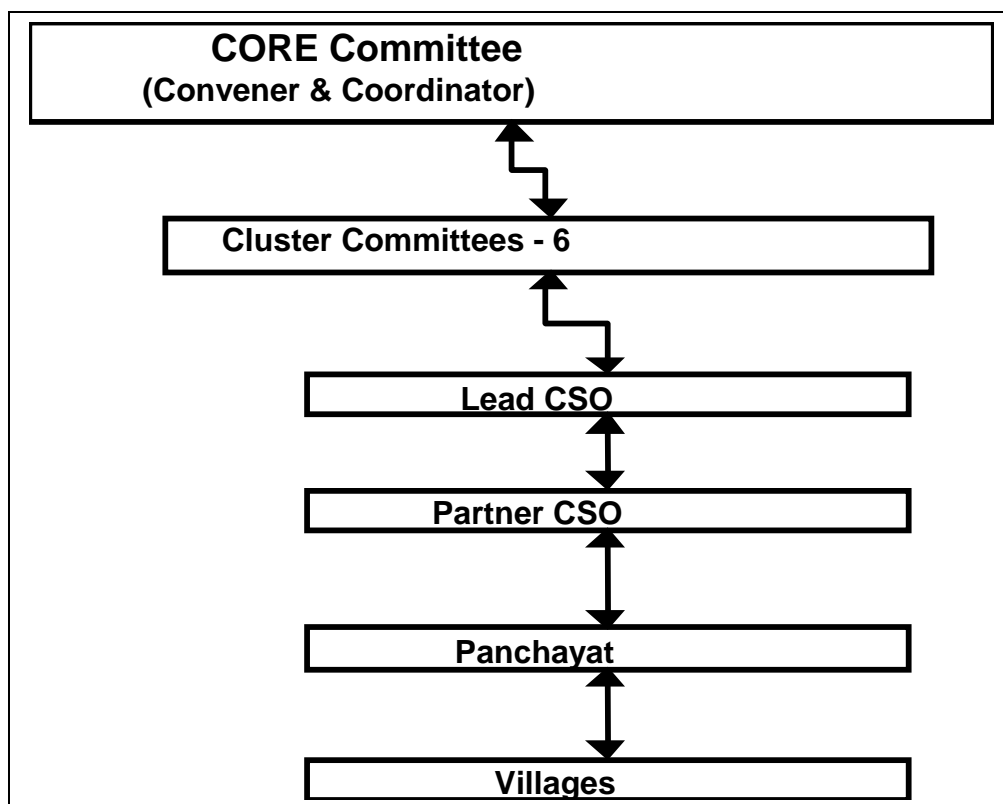
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3. Outcome of the Workshop

Strategy and Activities of Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan

After the sharing of views, experiences and suggestions for the strategy and activities of Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan, an overall strategy was built in the workshop.

The overall structure would look somewhat like the figure below.



Key aspects of the Abhiyan

- ✓ Unit – Panchayat: (Intervention in only those panchayats where project is being run)
- ✓ SHG would be the base for targeting campaign activities
- ✓ Women, Dalits and other Marginalized communities would be the focus of this campaign. The campaign activities would be conducted keeping in mind the major objectives of PACS
- ✓ Left out partners would also be brought under this Abhiyan (Action Aid, BDVS)
- ✓ Chalk out activities and develop a calendar

Common Activities

IEC material development:

Audio/Video/CDs - development/procurement
Flip charts – usage of existing charts & developing new charts
Posters/Banners/Booklets usable ones to be brought from UP and develop and print the rest in Bihar
Copy of all election related formats & its availability at information centers
Information on reserved seats and its proper follow-up

Information dissemination:

Establishment of Information dissemination center
Village Meetings
PIC – specific role during electoral processes
Samvad yatra
Video show/Radio Programmes
Pad yatra
Kala jhatha/ Nukkad Natak – formation & orientation
Mock-polling exercise
Help-line services

Training:

State level training – core committee
Training of field workers/Volunteers (ToT)
Training material Development
Cadre level training for potential candidates

Campaign:

Common Platform – for debate among all the contesting candidates
Interface with GO
Shanti-doot
Communication with Election Commission through CORE committee
Some legal status allocation from the commission
Voters Awareness campaign
Relation with block level election office
Field workers as mobile volunteers
Awareness regarding the qualities of PRI representatives – community sensitization
Coordination with GO & Booth committee
Ward/Village level meetings

The activities were chalked out and the responsibilities were divided at all the levels. The state based committee was supposed to develop and deliver the awareness materials, liaison with the government and other state level agencies, sensitize media at the state level while the cluster committees were supposed to liaison with all the regional level agencies. The

CSOs were supposed to undertake the activities at the grass root level in their respective project areas.

Feedbacks from CSOs

The workshop ended with some interesting feedbacks from the CSOs. They are: suggest the Government on amendment of Bihar PRI Act, Ensure flow of information to the CSOs, Ensure participation of women at the apex level – CORE committee, Cluster Committee, etc, timeliness of Abhiyan Activities, Memorandum to Government on conduction of PRI election on Party lines, Internal reflection on process followed among us, Check upon the seriousness among the CSO group, Interaction with PRI representatives after the election

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