

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

1. National Seminar on “Strategies for Poverty Reduction in Tribal Areas”

Issues and Recommendations

STRATEGY FOR TRIBAL POLICY

Policy

The Tribal Policy currently under formulation should strongly articulate the need for clear and concise role for tribal communities in the management of their own affairs and suggest definitive means to achieve the goal of tribal self governance in the spirit and letter of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA). Issues of empowerment of tribal communities should be taken up by the Inter-Sectoral Committee on Tribal Development of the Planning Commission.

Legal

The Central Government should take clear and precise initiatives to ensure compliance by the State to enact conformity legislations and the corresponding rules which incorporate that the provisions of PESA, particularly 4(d), 4(e) and 4(m) in letter and spirit.

Administrative

State Governments should be encouraged to handover power and authority to tribal communities to manage and monitor schools and health centres as has been successfully achieved through the implementation of the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Services Act. State Governments should also devise proper mechanisms for administrative support for tribal communities for effective exercise of their powers under PESA, NREGS, etc.

Training

Institutions like NIRD and SIRDs should take up a concerted action programme to empower tribal communities by capacity building

of tribal youth and interface with the State Governments to introduce appropriate provisions in State laws and rules that will lead to the empowerment of the communities. At the same time, NIRD and SIRDs must undertake regular training programmes for representatives of PRIs and tribal communities for empowerment and followup with supportive action.

Support

Government agencies like CAPART could revive the provision of financial support to NGOs / CBOs for 'Empowerment of Tribal Communities'.

PESA

Issues and Problems

- * PESA as in PESA 1996 [and not as per State laws]
- * Creating conditions for village (Gram Sabha) self-governance
- * Focus Unit : Hamlet or a group of hamlets as the case may be
- * Explanation: Governance relates to (a) establishment of governance rights over resources followed by (b) establishment of governance
- * Only a legal conferment of self-governance achieved. The command over resources to operationalise self-governance yet to be legally achieved
- * Resources in most tribal areas primarily relates to resources categorised as forest area; revenue and private land and water. All these are under the domain of State controlled through statutory laws.

Recommendations

- * To initiate a civil society processes that lead to effective responses from (a) the political apparatus, (b) the administrative apparatus and (c) the legislative apparatus.

- * To assess the opportunities available considering (a) Forest is a Centre-State subject, (b) Land and water (except inter-state rivers) are State subjects (opportunities for the purpose is defined as conflicts and struggles around these three livelihood resources).
- * To mobilise civil society opinion and processes in support of the task of empowerment of tribal communities to manage their own communities and their resources by voicing them through multiple means to generate appropriate response from political, administrative and legislative apparatus.

RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD IN TRIBAL AREAS

Issues

- * Recognition and restoration of rights to land, forest, water and other natural resources in the region, which they inhabit, underpin the right to livelihood.
- * Bio diverse dry land agriculture practices that comprise multiple varieties of cereals, millets, pulses, legumes, oilseeds, vegetables, tubers, leafy vegetables have traditionally been cultivated in mixed-cropping systems on the land. Conserving seeds for the next season and a highly evolved mode of selection of seeds for the next year embody the agriculture system.
- * To date, *adivasis* have only played a role of being collectors and sellers of the products. There have been half-hearted attempts to actually do value-addition / processing at the village level, and thus ensure higher returns.
- * Excessive priority on marketing medicinal plants for distant markets, compromises their own right to use this knowledge and its related resources using their own traditions of healing.
- * Livestock – particularly small livestock a unique feature of peoples livelihood - small cattle primarily meant for draught, dung and meat, goats and poultry. Some of the hardiest and most

prolific dwarf breeds of goats, and most disease resistant and finest meat breeds of poultry (e.g. Aseel, Kadaknath) are found in adivasi areas.

- * Grazing livestock in forests and lopping of trees for fodder, is a major livelihood strategy of adivasi communities. Since British Forest Policy to date, is continuously being challenged and denied. Denying grazing rights, threatens a major livelihood of the people.
- * Wage labour is another extremely important component of the livelihood of *adivasi* communities. Currently all *adivasi* areas are not covered in the first phase of the National Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Recommendations

1. Strategies and policies that promote and encourage bio-diverse dry land farming using ecological farming principles and on-farm conservation of a multiplicity of domestic, semi-wild and wild species of crops.
2. Diversity of livestock is an integral component of dry land agriculture, and the local breeds of livestock need to be promoted and reared. Full and complete preventive health coverage must be provided by the State (e.g. regular preventive vaccinations for major endemic diseases that effect poultry, goats, cattle), as high mortality amongst *adivasi* livestock stocks are a major cause of production loss and livelihood loss.
3. Cooperative systems for building local food and livestock resources that can be at once locally consumed, as also tie into local markets and outlets.
4. Decentralised and locally managed systems of PDS with government monetary support that incorporate local foods - millets, pulses, cereals, etc.

5. Strategies that enable complete control by community through PESA on deciding upon local use, conservation, management, value-addition, marketing of forest produce, agriculture and livestock products.
6. National Employment Guarantee Programme to be implemented in all adivasi areas as a priority. The activities which this covers should focus on natural resource regeneration activities both on individual private lands as also public spaces, as planned and decided by the local community (e.g. soil and moisture conservation, repairing wells, growing trees of people's choice and location of choice, renovating and repair and maintenance of traditional water and irrigation methods), which absorbs their labour and enhances the diversity of production.

LAND ALIENATION

For restoration of alienated tribal lands from possession of non-tribals, several laws and regulations were promulgated in fifth scheduled areas. Unscrupulous non-tribals have gained access to tribal lands through different clandestine transactions. Where two cultures come into conflict, the State and legislative machinery were weighed in favour of non-tribals.

RESTORATION OF ALIENATED TRIBAL LANDS

1. Access to land records and other related information / court orders at panchayat level and updating of land records.
2. Legal assistance to tribals through legal cells at ITDA level with activists to pursue the legal action through institutions.
3. Creation of task force to address all the tribal land alienation issues and monitor the enforcing authorities and grievances redressal mechanisms.
4. State level monitoring committee be set up with socio, legal activists and tribal welfare, revenue and police officials to achieve the goals of Tribal Protective Land Laws.

5. Time bound action plans, to scrutiny of land cases which are decided in favour of non-tribals earlier prefer necessary appeals against such orders.
6. Time bound action plans need to be prepared for the scrutiny of entitlements / Pattas granted in favour of non-tribals in tribal areas, and challenge the same if found fraudulent.
7. Posting of officers, after orientation, legal training for effective implementation of Tribal Protective Land Laws in the tribal areas.
8. Legislative changes to be brought to existing Tribal Protective Land Laws in order to plug the loopholes in the laws and facilitate further scrutiny of earlier land cases and challenge the entitlements issued in favour of non-tribals.
9. Redressal mechanisms of land alienation matters be created in consonance with the provisions of PESA Act.
10. Evidence Act to be amended in order to give credence to Gram Sabha resolutions in weighing the evidence in tribal land alienated matters.
11. Total ban on transfer of lands other than in favour of tribals be imposed, by bringing the changes to existing land laws in the Tribal Areas of the country, similar to the provisions of Land Transfer Regulations 1 of 70 which is applicable to Scheduled areas of Andhra Pradesh.

PROTECTION TO TRIBAL LAND HOLDINGS

1. Any policy or intervention of the State or outsiders shall not directly or indirectly create any adverse impact or dilute the letter and spirit of the Tribal Protective Land Laws.
2. Land acquisition in the name of public purpose cannot be taken up for the companies or outsiders.
3. Tribal Protective Land Laws in the fifth scheduled areas should have overriding effect on other laws including Land Acquisition

Laws. In unavoidable circumstances, least or minimum displacement projects be taken up. Rehabilitation and resettlement must be made within the scheduled areas with an approval from the PAP.

4. In this process of rehabilitation and resettlement under projects concerning human rights of PAP shall be upheld by the State.

TRIBAL EDUCATION

Issues and Problems

- * Lack of infrastructural facilities in school like classrooms, safe drinking water, toilet, furniture, etc.
- * Inadequate qualified, competent and committed teachers. Lack of appropriate teaching - learning materials.
- * Reluctance on the part of parents to send the children to school due to economic problems. Low perceived value of education by the community.
- * Ineffective functioning of pre-school education of ICDS system related aspects.

STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH PRIMARY EDUCATION

- * There should be a paradigm shift from schooling to learning with emphasis on continuing life-long education. The learners should be encouraged to provide leadership in determining the programme, ensuring its quality and the learning outcomes.
- * Supplementary and remedial education for under achieving students and special coaching for fast learners may be encouraged by the school with the help of CBOs and community. Moreover mainstreaming out of school and into school is a primary concern. Vocational skills may be imparted to children along with the necessary education.
- * Flexible school schedule may be adopted for the poor children.

- * The entry points for literacy for women must be identified. Literacy based on skills may be organised through SHGs, Anganwadi centres. Establishment of Resource Centres to disseminate information on various aspects like health, nutrition, immunisation, value of pre-school education, development programmes, rights would definitely enhance the tribals risk taking abilities.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

2. Financial Management of DRDAs

Objectives

- a) A one-day Workshop on Financial Management of DRDAs was held with an objective of drawing a clear road map for preparation of action plan indicating the number of personnel to be trained at various levels;
- b) Agencies to be involved in training and in preparation of training material, assessment of financial needs etc.;
- c) To suggesting certain appropriate training methodologies for building the capacities of Accounts Personnel working in DRDAs and the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Workshop was attended by 15 senior representatives from the Chief Controller of Accounts (MORD), Institute of Public Auditors of India (IPAI), Financial Management Research and Resource Society (FMRRS), Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDA), Himachal Pradesh Institute of Public Administration. Comptroller and Accountant General, National Institute of Financial Management, Chartered Accountants and State Institutes of Rural Development.

The participants examined some of the important issues related to training and the participants strongly felt that the non-training aspects having a bearing on performance such as career promotion opportunities for the accounts staff and have to be allocated.

1. ISSUES : NODAL AGENCY AT STATE LEVEL

For organising a series of trainings for accounts personnel and development functionaries an agency should be entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating, implementing and monitoring of various training programmes in each State. The agency should be well

equipped within the field of financial management. Some short term, medium and long term arrangements may be made for achieving high levels of efficiency in funds management.

Recommendation

It was suggested that the SIRDs should be considered as nodal agencies. A financial management cell may be created and also some core faculty should be provided with the financial support of MoRD. Cooperative Training Institutions and Extension Training Centres (ETCs) should be used as venues for organising programmes for the district and below. SIRDs, besides organising TOTs should also involve in preparation of training modules in simple local language. In addition the nine regional Training Institutes of the CAG, four Institutes of the CGA, NIFM, Bankers Training Institutes, IPAI, Institute of Chartered Accountants (States Chapters) should be the Resource Training Institutes.

2. ISSUES : MASTER TRAINERS AT STATE LEVEL

Training for short duration of 5 to 6 days may not be adequate and it was suggested that the period be longer enough to ensure a hands-on experience. They also indicated that more number of Master Trainers need to be trained in each State.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a small group may be constituted to decide the duration of the Training of Trainers and also the number of Master Trainers keeping in view the size of the target groups (accounts staff and other concerned functionaries).

3. ISSUES : TRAINING OF TRAINERS AT DISTRICT LEVEL

Since a large mass of development functionaries including account staff are working at the district and below the functionaries need to be trained. The members strongly emphasised that without making changes in the accounting systems at the three tiers of PRIs and BDO there cannot be tangible improvements in Financial

Management at DRDAs since most of the RD programmes are being implemented through the former institutions.

It is also suggested that the students who have completed 10+2 after appropriate screening can also be imparted training through reputed training institutions. The Gram Panchayats can avail of the services of the trained candidates on payment basis.

Recommendation

1. Besides the faculty members of SIRDs with specialisation in financial management, NGOs with expertise and the PG students specialising in commerce could be trained and placed in DRDAs and other offices to acquire needed insights and experience. These trainers including the resource persons mainly drawn from the Chartered Accountants at the local level can impart training for the development functionaries for which Institutions need to be identified. A small group of experts from MoRD, NIRD and other Institutions like IPAI and FMRRS be constituted to workout the modalities of identifying the institutions, which can recruit the M.Com and NGO students. This group can also indicate the likely cost of outsourcing the activity.
2. MoRD / NIRD can seek expression of interest (EoI) from the various training institutions like NIFM, Regional training institution of CAG, Indian Audit and Accounts Institute etc.
3. MoRD and the States need to recognise the qualifying examination conducted by IPAI and also permit Gram Panchayats to engage the services of the qualified personnel.
4. ISSUE : PREPARATION OF TRAINING CURRICULUM

Several organisations have been imparting training to the accounts personnel at various levels (such as IPAI and NIFM). There is a need to examine these various training modules and technologies followed, the duration etc., in a more comprehensive way.

Recommendation

A Committee has been constituted to critically review the training modules developed by IPAI, SIRDs etc., and suggest the appropriate training modules, duration, training methods for different categories of development personnel. A few other members from SIRDs, IPAI, and NIFM etc. can be coopted by the Committee Chairman. Representatives from MoRD and NIRD can also be considered as members of the Committee. NIRD will meet the expenditure relating to the meetings of the Committee with support from MoRD.

5. ISSUE : TRAINING STRATEGY FOR BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF ACCOUNTS PERSONNEL AND OTHERS

A small groups of experts from the Ministry, NIRD and the other institutions be constituted to workout the details and evolve strategy to impart training to all the target groups. It was also mentioned that training institutions be consulted in this regard.

Recommendation

A small group need to be constituted with participation of Accounts Wing of the Ministry, Representative from NIRD, Representative from FMRRS, IRDA, Controller and Accountant General and SIRDs to workout the strategy – number to be trained at various level, training institutions for networking, arrangement for monitoring the training activity and funds requirement. MoRD / NIRD can direct the training institutions to indicate their willingness and also the type of trainees they would like to train, the geographical coverage, duration, training methods, costs for organising the training programmes.

SOCIAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

3. National Workshop on Rural Drinking Water Supply (RDWS) : Sector Reforms and Bharat Nirman

Introduction

The principles and practices of Swajaldhara, among others, include : Demand-driven and demand-responsive approaches with focus on community participation and empowerment of villagers and village level institutions like the drinking water user groups, panchayats and others; decision-making regarding choice of drinking water schemes and technologies, designing, planning, implementation and overall management resting with the community; full ownership of drinking water assets by the communities and panchayats; partial capital cost sharing either in cash or kind including labour or both; 100 per cent responsibility of operation and maintenance by the users; integrated service delivery mechanisms; water conservation, rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharging, and shift in the role of government from the role of provider to facilitator.

The challenge now is to consolidate and sustain these practices. This calls for establishing community-based institutions and development of competencies for internalisation as well as institutionalisation of reforms. Also, there is need for taking stock of its progress in different States by way of sharing experiences and success stories even while referring to the impediments facing the planners and implementers, and users as well.

Objectives

- * To enable the RDWS planners and implementers recent experiences and lessons;
- * To facilitate review of implementation of core components of RDWS with focus on reforms and Bharat Nirman; and
- * To enable the participants prioritise remedial actions and affect mid-term corrections for improved water management.

Senior and middle-level officials of State Water and Sanitation Missions, PHEDs and RD departments; district level officers of District Water and Sanitation Missions, Presidents of DWSMs and VWSCs; User group members NGO functionaries involved in RDWS implementation and representatives of National Level Key Resource Centres (NLKRCs) and CCDUs participated in this workshop.

Recommendations

Issue - 1 : What Policy Changes are Needed

1. The Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with the ground and river water authorities should issue clear instructions to the States to accord priority to drinking water. Particularly in drought areas, water intensive crops must be regulated so as to provide for drinking water, especially in summers. Water security can thus be largely ensured as envisaged in the National Water Policy, 2003.
2. Use of ground water should be so articulated that aberrations such as the one involving Coca Cola in Perumatti village in Palakkad, Kerala can be avoided. The pricing should be such that the opportunity cost of drinking water *vis-a-vis* beverages and soft drinks is offset and charged to the private companies.
3. Privatisation of drinking water should be done cautiously and in consultation with the local user communities. Privatisation should not come to mean distribution only but must also include development of water sources that are sustainable. In fact, certain methods should be involved to introduce public-private partnerships with solid and acceptable Terms of Reference (ToR).
4. Privatisation of river water for supplying water to industries should be reviewed in view of the problems in case like Radial Waters in MP-formation of new States and subsequent breach of ToR.
5. Pollution Control Boards, Agricultural Farmers' Associations and Drinking Water Users' Associations should be vested with

tangible powers so that they can be entrusted with the job of monitoring the quality of (drinking) water. These associations should also be vested with (quasi judicial) powers to enforce the recommendations of designated authorities to ensure rigorous implementation of anti-water pollution measures. The case of pollution of Noyal River in Coimbaore by the dyeing industries near Timpur is a grim reminder of poor monitoring of water quality and poorer enforcement on the part of the State pollution control units.

6. In states like Rajasthan electricity charges are levied on drinking water projects, whether small or big, as if they are industrial projects. This needs to be remedied through appropriate legislation and fixation of water tariffs.
7. In the north-eastern States and States like J&K there is need for higher subsidies on inputs like electricity and management of treatment plants and distribution channels.
8. In the long run, the micro-level; user committees should become institutional substitutes for lower level bureaucracy and institutional complement to higher level bureaucracy. The role of agencies like PHED should transform into that of water quality monitoring, surveillance, testing, mitigation and eventual eradication of water quality problems.

Issue 2 : How to Streamline Administration Systems and Funding Procedures

9. Multiplicity of drinking water schemes and concomitant and confusing nomenclatures should be removed. The funding and sharing norms should be uniform across the States, of course with exceptions in difficult terrain areas, etc. Community contribution in the form of 10 per cent of the capital costs should be reduced to 5 per cent with a provision for substitution of cash contributions with labour contributions in the case of the BPL families.

10. The concept of 100 per cent Operations and Maintenance (O&M) on the part of the community/user associations/panchayats under 'Swajaldhara' should be reviewed as most of the schemes in several States are considering it as a burden. It is for this reason, a significant number of schemes are working at sub-optimal levels of efficiency. Therefore, the States, in consultation with the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM) and State Water and Sanitation Missions, should evolve a framework for realistic O and M cost contributions by the users/ implementing agencies.
11. The latest National Employment Guarantee Programme should envisage integration of drinking water schemes on priority with special focus on the BPL population. Schemes such as Food for Work should also be dovetailed to suit the construction and O and M requirements of drinking water schemes.
12. The additional allocations for WATSAN projects under Bharat Nirman should be so utilised that every village/habitation in the country is adequately reached by one or other drinking water scheme by 2007.
13. The second part of funding to the States under Bharat Nirman should be earmarked for strengthening the States, district and village level drinking water and sanitation committees. In particular, provision should be made for hiring of market-based professionals to carry out select tasks as expected by the State Governments and GOI.
14. There is some confusion regarding continuity of sector reform pilot projects into the Swajaldhara schemes. This approach blocks the assimilation of learnings from the pilot projects. Therefore, a separate guideline should be issued in this regard.
15. The State action plans covering NC/PC habitations, as determined by CAP 99, need to be reviewed and funding extended under the Swajaldhara schemes. Furthermore, the confusion regarding Swajaldhara funds and ARWSP funds should be overcome.

16. The States should be encouraged to take loans from development agencies like NABARD, World Bank etc. for completion of all the pending projects.
17. The packed water can be rationed and limited to 5 lit. of water/day/person for drinking and cooking. The distribution channels may include PDS outlets, cooperatives etc. In this process one can also expect supply of quality water. The pollution control boards and water testing labs should be made accountable for ensuring the prescribed standards of quality of water.
18. While cross subsidies to the poor should be encouraged, greater emphasis should be laid on gradual reduction in subsidies. Such a strategy should be beyond upward revision of water charges for the rich and cover technical improvements in water delivery system to minimise water loss (currently estimated at 33 per cent and bring about changes in the staffing pattern with focus on reduced salary expenditures (currently estimated at 70 per cent).

Issue - 3 : Indicators for M and E

19. Towards improved monitoring of the Swajaldhara programmes by the RGNDWM/and other agencies including PRIs, the following indicators should be used for varying investments and support services :
 - a) Level of utilisation of GOI funds
 - b) Timely completion of projects
 - c) Quality of capacity building of the professionals as well as members of the user committees, PRIs and support staff involved in WATSAN projects
 - d) Quality of community participation, reduction in incidence of water borne diseases
 - e) Extent of sustainability of sources innovations in O and M cost recovery and quality of water

- f) The State water and sanitation missions should have separate water quality monitoring and surveillance wings.
- 20. The PRIs should be made legally responsible for provision and regulation of drinking water. They should also fully utilise the 11th and 12th Finance Commission Funds earmarked for RDWS Schemes.

Issues - 4 : Capacity Building

- 21. Capacity building of key staff and members of WATSAN committees should be done through study-cum-exposure visits rather than classroom based training programmes alone. The role of PHEDs/PREDs/other equivalent agencies incharge of drinking water projects should be recast to infuse the new spirit and principles of Swajaldhara.
- 22. The IEC component in the drinking water schemes should be broad-based so as to include the services of staff and water related departments like health, ICDS, etc. In fact, the field staff of these departments should be seen as major IEC providers in cooperation with IEC staff of WATSAN projects.
- 23. In fact, we should even begin to think of privatisation of IEC activities and services. Community-based organisations like Water Users' Committees, Mahila Mandals, Nehru Yuvak Kendras, and NSS Units should be entrusted with the task on an experimental basis.
- 24. The State Water and Sanitation Missions should bring out quarterly newsletters with focus on best practices in the WATSAN sector. The mailing lists should include all the States water sanitation missions, district water and sanitation missions and training institutions.

Issue - 5 : Water Conservation and Water Quality

- 25. Greater emphasis should be laid on decentralised provision of drinking water even within villages with focus on access to the SCs and STs.

26. Field evidence indicates that piped household water supply goes against the principles of conservation, for a lot of water is wasted. Greater emphasis should be laid on piped but centralised water delivery points, where water is not scarce.
27. Over-exploitation of ground water through borewells is contributing to a rapid decline in water quality as is happening in States like Rajasthan, MP and Andhra Pradesh in particular. Excess fluoride is one of the major problems of quality of water. Therefore, ground water recharging assumes critical significance. Rainwater harvesting should be seen as a major strategy for water augmentation and quality assurance. Domestic level rooftop rainwater harvesting should be integral to the entire exercise of water recharging and water augmentation.
28. State-wise, region-specific frameworks for public-private partnerships are required. The State water and Sanitation Missions and PRIs should undertake this task preferably through a consultative meeting—involving the potential corporate agencies such as NGOs and CBOs. Top priority should be accorded to the welfare objective even while articulating on entitlements, pricing and quality.
29. Affordability to pay should be seen as a major factor in the case of BPL families. Those using more than 40 lpcd should be charged at higher rates than otherwise so as to generate some revenue even while ensuring some semblance of (drinking) water conservation.

4. National Workshop on IAY and Shelter for all by 2010

Introduction

The National workshop on IAY and Shelter for all by 2010 was organised during 20 –22 February 2006. It was attended by 25 participants which includes 4 internal faculty members representing 8 different States. The methodology followed for conducting the workshop was brainstorming followed by sub-group and plenary discussions were held based on the six themes identified which are as follows :

Objectives

1. To discuss problems associated with planning and implementation of IAY
2. To examine Institutional finances and problems of access to credit in rural housing sector
3. To understand State specific initiatives for achieving shelter for all by 2010
4. Role of PRI, CBOs, NGOs and Community in implementation of IAY
5. Transparency, accountability and people's participation in IAY
6. Convergence of basic services and use of cost effective and environment friendly technologies in IAY

Recommendations

- 1) The definition of “pucca house” must be clearly spelt out for house construction under IAY programme. In absence of such definition, the implementing agency emphasises on construction of cement concrete RCC house in all climatic and geographical regions where construction of RCC house is both expensive and also not suitable. This should be redefined as “fireproof durable

house” which may be constructed by using locally available material and traditional skill.

- 2) The present prescribed unit size 200 –220 sq. feet is insufficient for a small rural family with no space for occupational needs. The minimum unit size may be extended to 350 sq. ft. subsequently and the unit cost may be enhanced to Rs.50,000.
- 3) There are state-specific schemes for rural housing independent of IAY house in some States. The norms and financial allocation for these State schemes are at variance with IAY programme. This cause duplication and confusion. Therefore, there is need to integrate all types of housing schemes on a uniform pattern in the State. The central government may allow flexibility for the States to suitably modify the IAY schemes incorporating the State programme. However, the modified State specific scheme should not adopt house specification lower than that which is recommended by GOI.
- 4) Non-availability of house site for the houseless persons in the existing village is a major problem in implementation of the scheme. At times it results in exclusion of most needy in the Gram Sabha on reason that he could not construct the house. Hence, emphasis may be given to development of new community housesites close to the existing village as far as possible. The house plot should not be less than 500 sq. feet with scope for expansion. It may be provided free of cost where village panchayat develop such housing site it may be permitted to decide a differential pricing for house plots for selected IAY beneficiaries (BPL households) and non-beneficiaries. Where government land is not available, private land may be purchased for IAY housing in the village area. The cost of the house site may be met from a special allocation in IAY programme with 50 per cent State and 50 per cent Central assistance.
- 5) There is lack of awareness on various cost effective housing technology utilising the locally available material in rural area. There is need to establish model demonstration houses at

Panchayat and block level utilising the cost effective local material and house design. These houses should not be just model but be put to use to win confidence of its utility.

- 6) There is need to strengthen the administrative and technical staff at local level (block/mandal) for proper monitoring and vigilance in implementation of the programme
- 7) In some cases it has been noticed that the Gram Sabha is dominated by few influential and people particularly in case of clear political divide in the village. In such cases most needy are denied. Hence the presence of the government official in the gram sabha need to be mandatory. The official representing the government should be made signatory to the proceedings at the gram sabha for selection of the beneficiary. A block level empowered committee may be established where it is not in existence under the Chairmanship of the President of the Panchayat Samiti. The nearest defeated opposition candidate to the P.S. President should be member of this empower committee. Any complaint regarding the selection of IAY beneficiary should be made to this Committee to reduce political interference in the beneficiary selection process.
- 8) The number of houseless arrived at in BPL census 2002 should be the baseline in allocation of Central assistance to the state and respectively setting district and block-wise target in the State.
- 9) As regards upgradation of the house in IAY is concerned, there is no well defined procedure for selection of beneficiary or clear directive is available for the type/nature of houses upgradation required to be made. In the absence of such clear guideline, the assistance availed for house upgradation is often misutilised or is spent for other purposes. Therefore, there is need to clearly spelt out the items of work for house upgradation
- 10) There is no defined policy for housing credit to poor rural people without tangible assets. The banks are not willing to provide housing loan to such households in rural area without proper

sureties and mortgage of assets. Thus, in the absence of institutional credit, they are compelled to take loan from informal sources at high rate of interest. Therefore, there is need for relaxation in norms of bank loan for rural housing. In such case, the criteria should be the size of the house proposed to be constructed (less than 500 sq. ft) rather than the economic criteria of the person. The rural housing credit may be provided in the name of the housewife.

- 11) The Central government should direct all the banks to increase allocation for housing sector in rural area. The banks should charge a differential (2 per cent) less interest on housing loan in rural area where there are active NGO, the representative of such NGO and office bearer of the SHG groups may be invited to participate in the special Gram Sabha being organised for selection of the IAY beneficiaries.
- 12) Poor local supervision by the Gram Panchayat in some cases leads to underutilisation/misutilisation of the IAY housing assistance money, in such case the panchayat Pradhan, the village development officer and the beneficiary may be made jointly responsible.
- 13) The local NGOs and GP may be encouraged to actively associate in promotion of the cost effective local technology and house construction material. The NGOs may be encouraged to put up demonstration of cost effective building using the locally available material. The SHGs and NGOs may get into production and supply of prefabricated housing material like "Chaukath, pillar" etc. as replacement to wood and iron in construction of the IAY houses.
- 14) Emphasis be given to use of building material replacing iron, wood and minimum use of cement.
- 15) The construction of disaster resistance house particularly in case of earthquake is high, and keeping this in view, the amount may be suitably increased for house construction in earthquake zone.

POLICIES ON PANCHAYATI RAJ

5. Policy Perspectives on Panchayati Raj for Members of Legislative Assemblies/Councils : Issues and Recommendations

Introduction

The workshop on 'Policy Perspectives on Panchayati Raj' for Members of Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils was held during February 1-2, 2006. The workshop was attended by 34 MLAs/MLCs representing 11 States of the country. The following are the recommendations which emerged out of the workshop.

1. *Issue* : The growth of panchayats in the country is varied and uneven. Some States are better placed whereas some States have remained static for a host of reasons.

Recommendations : (1) In order to accomplish the spirit of the Constitution, the workshop urged the States to devolve necessary functions, functionaries and funds to the panchayats.

(2) It was pointed out that some of the State Panchayat Acts, which are not in accordance or in the spirit of the 73rd Amendment need to be repealed. And one such points to Jammu and Kashmir is one such State where several provisions of Panchayats Act need to be amended to strengthen the panchayat system. It was stated that the State Government enjoys enormous powers to control the panchayats; eg., panchayats can be superseded indefinitely (Section IX). Such provisions are erroneous and negate the process of strengthening panchayat system, therefore it should be modified. It was also mentioned that the Village Secretary posted at Gram Panchayats in Jammu and Kashmir yield enormous powers and also dominates over the elected head of Gram Panchayats which does not seem to be a healthy democratic practice where elected functionary has to obey the official functionaries posted in the Body. Moreover, the

connivance of village level workers and other official functionaries at the Gram Panchayat and Block level, leads to corruption.

- (2) *Issue* : In some of the Gram Panchayats, Sarpanch is like a contractor who can pilferage funds and not concentrate on good quality construction work. Such nexus needs to be broken. It was mentioned that the elected Sarpanch does not get any honorarium or travel allowance for monitoring the developmental activities in their jurisdiction, which leads to possible corrupt practices.

Recommendation : There is a need to provide honorarium and travel allowance or sitting fee for attending meetings for elected members at all the three levels.

- (3) *Issue* : A critical issue regarding indirect election of Adhyakshas/ Presidents of District and Block level was raised by the members of Uttar Pradesh. Due to indirect election, horse-trading of elected members across the parties does take place and it centers on money power in President's election. This is viewed as a serious flaw in the existing provisions in panchayat system and needs a serious debate on the issue since it is mandated in the Constitution.

Recommendations : (1) Direct election of Zilla Parishad Adhyaksh may be considered in order to reduce the malpractices and also requires further amendment in the Constitution.

- (4) *Issue*: The mandated provision of the Constitution under Article 243 ZD to constitute District Planning Committee (DPC) has not been fully achieved. Many States have not yet constituted DPCs and wherever the DPCs exist they are not well established. Moreover, it was pointed out that Legislators have no role to play in the DPC and are not being invited to this Body.

Recommendations : (1) The workshop therefore recommended that DPC should be constituted in all States in compliance with the mandated provisions of the Constitution.

(2) It was strongly felt that Members of Legislative Assembly be involved as members of the DPC. To have a comprehensive representation of the local area, defeated candidates at the Zilla Parishad level may also be included in the DPC so that larger view and requirements of the area can be considered while formulating plan at the District level.

(3) The Members of the Legislative Assembly are expected to play a constructive role in the process of strengthening the panchayat system and they should not be a stumbling block in this process. The powers and roles of legislators may be diluted if more powers and functions are given to the local bodies. It was also pointed out that a legislator may appreciate and understand that they have larger than life size role to function in State issues relating to pro-poor development. This needs to be clarified so that legislators can positively patronise the Panchayats in order to make it an institution of self-governance.

(5) *Issues:* Gram Sabha is a participatory, deliberative democratic unit. The experiences so far are not very encouraging and Gram Sabhas are not being held for various reasons. After sufficient deliberations on its distinct advantages to make the system transparent, accountable, responsive and with larger people's participation, the workshop strongly recommended that suitable measures should be taken to make the Gram Sabha meaningful and purposeful.

Recommendations : (1) It was suggested that the Gram Sabhas could further be held at Ward level as it is being done in some States, or each Ward may send some representatives to constitute Gram Sabha as it is practiced in cooperative bodies for functioning of the Gram Sabha.

(2) The workshop strongly recommended that all developmental works should be decided in the Gram Sabha and all financial matters should be brought to the notice of the Gram Sabha. A representative from Karnataka emphasised that the resolutions passed by the Gram Sabha cannot be changed at any level.

(3) The higher authorities should keep watch on regular conduct of Gram Sabhas, otherwise some punitive action is desirable against the person concerned.

(4) The attendance of women in Gram Sabha is not encouraging; therefore it should be ensured that atleast 1/3rd women attend the Gram Sabha meetings.

- (6) *Issue:* The representatives from Maharashtra mentioned that the voters' turn out in the panchayat elections is quite low.

Recommendation : Therefore the State Election Commission may consider awareness-building campaign for increasing the voters at the local level. This could enable people's participation in a large number to weed out unhealthy and anti-social elements in the election system.

- (7) *Issue:* The workshop strongly felt the need for capacity building of elected representatives in the panchayats. It was stated that because of reservations system many neo-literates are not in a position to appreciate and understand the development imperatives, therefore orientation of elected members is necessary.

Recommendation: (1) The workshop strongly recommended that orientation should be given to all members immediately after election to these bodies and subsequently followed by another spell of training.

(2) The Bihar State is slowly and steadily focusing on development and trying to strengthen the Gram Sabhas. They propose to garner resources across all developmental programmes or from poverty alleviation programmes and converge resources for developmental activities at the Gram Panchayat level. It was also stated that there needs to be a prime requisite for minimum educational qualifications for sarpanches as they have executive powers and it is necessary to understand the various guidelines, preparation of agenda and other pre-

requisites for functioning as a pro-poor representative at the local level.

- (8) *Issue* : A larger part of Jharkhand State is covered under the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, but it is not yet operative.

Recommendations: (1) PRIs needs to be strengthened and PESA operationalised.

(2) Panchayat election has not been conducted in the State, which needs urgent attention.

- (9) *Issue* : Another important issue debated was the ideal size of panchayats. In a small State like Manipur, the approximate population is 25000 for Legislative Assembly, at Zilla Parishad level it is approximately about 5000-10000 population, at Block level it is about 3000 population and for Sarpanch 300-500 population whereas in big States it is quite high for each unit.

Recommendation: The variation is quite uneven and there is a need to reconstitute the territorial area of each unit.

- (10) *Issue* : To devolve adequate powers to the panchayats. In response to the people's campaign in Kerala 40 per cent i.e., approximately Rs.3,000 crores annually as untied grant provided to PRIs. This literally enhanced the number of developmental projects at the local level as the PRIs came up with several projects, which were exclusively catering to the pro-poor.

Recommendation : (1) Like Kerala all the states in the country should provide the required amount of funds to the PRIs for their effective functioning.

- (11) *Issue*: Most of the projects taken up under the employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes are discontinuous in nature benefiting the needy only for a short time.

Recommendation

- a. Projects should be continuous creating durable assets and with forward linkages to create further employment.
- b. The nature of the projects should be such that it should yield economic returns like creation of water bodies, which will give benefits over a period of time.
- c. Market facilities in rural areas should be developed with networking with each level facilities for the products emanating from the village and further linkages to higher level like district or State markets.
- d. Attempts should be made to educate and generate awareness among the people. Motivational strategies have to be planned to help the poor in order to build confidence.
- e. Proper dissemination of information at grassroots level is essential to make use of poverty alleviation programmes.

(12) *Issue:* Transparency

Recommendations: Right to Information (RTI) is a progressive legislation and the workshop highly appreciated its provisions to curb rampant corruption at various levels to make the system more transparent.

(1) While discussing various provisions of the Act, the workshop suggested that the appointment of Chief Information Officer (CIO) should be done very carefully. As it has been found in many States, retired IAS officers appointed as CIOs may not be appropriate for the position since this is a neutral post and a person serving for decades as an officer might be influenced with his previous work and may not do justice while discharging his duties as CIO. Therefore, to rule out this apprehension, it is essential that the CIO should be appointed with clear records and with no pending enquiry during their service.

(2) People are not much aware about the RTI especially in rural areas where there are large number of illiterates and the provisions of the Act may not reach them. Therefore, it is necessary to spell the provisions clearly to the people and a campaign mode is required. This can be done through NGOs as also the media can play a key role to educate masses in all aspects of RTI. It was also felt by the participants that the Legislators could also play an important role in organising awareness-building campaign in their Constituencies.

- (13) *Issue:* Implementation of NREGS : The provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) were discussed and the workshop felt that it is a revolutionary piece of legislation to provide employment in the rural areas. There was a lurking suspicion about proper implementation of this scheme in the States.

Recommendations: (1) The workshop strongly recommended that the provisions of the Act should be made aware in the rural areas in a campaign mode and Gram Sabha may play an important role in disseminating information. It was felt that Gram Sabha could be utilised to check any harassment or non-compliance from the authorities that are seeking job.

6. Transparency and Accountability in PRIs

Introduction

The workshop on Transparency and Accountability in PRIs was organised on February 16-18, 2006. Twenty-two participants from seven States attended the workshop which included elected representatives, officials, academicians and representatives from NGOs.

Objectives

- * To discuss enabling role of panchayats for providing good governance;
- * To examine the role of gram sabha in promoting transparency and accountability; and
- * To share innovative and best practices adopted by panchayats in this regard.

Issues and Recommendations of Workshop

- * *Issue:* Recognising the Institution of gram sabha as a forum for participatory and deliberative democracy, the workshop felt that the gram sabha is not being convened due to obvious reasons, therefore, there is a need to activate the functioning of the gram sabha to make it more meaningful and purposeful.
- * *Recommendations:* (1) Need to create intensive awareness among the people about the very purpose of gram sabha, which should be done in a campaign mode.

(2) The political parties should also take up this issue and through their cadre at the grassroots level to facilitate a campaign strategy to intensify the role of gram sabha to make it more functional.

(3) It was further suggested that to give importance to gram sabha as an important tenet of democracy, it should be included in the curriculum at the school level. It was observed that the

schools should be the suitable medium where students can be motivated to ensure active participation of the villagers particularly their parents.

(4) The flow of funds received through various schemes and programmes including the MPLAD and MLALAD at the gram panchayat level should be declared in the gram sabha meeting since development programmes are being planned at the gram sabha level and also huge quantum of money is handled by the gram panchayats.

(5) The workshop recommends that the officers of the line departments who are placed under the umbrella of panchayati raj system to attend the gram sabha compulsorily so that issues relevant to those line departments can be discussed and decided in the gram sabha.

(6) Suggestion were also made that the officers from the line departments should inform the gram sabha about the programmes and schemes of their departments and share relevant information. Gram Sabha should be used, as an appropriate forum for dissemination of information and informed decisions of the body will be more appropriate. This will provide confidence and faith in the body so that high attendance of the people may be expected in the meetings.

(7) In some States, it was pointed out; a system of family card has been introduced. This family card can be utilised to increase the participation of people in the gram sabha as also to record the attendance of the family whether any member of the family attended the Gram Sabha meeting. If the members of the family do not attend the gram sabha there could be some disincentive to the family. The type of disincentive to the family could also be decided in the gram sabha. Such practice may put pressure on villages to attend the gram sabha.

* *Issue* : Social audit is considered to be the best tool to ensure accountability of the elected representatives as also the unit of

governance. It was mentioned that in many States no such rules and procedures for social audit has been formulated.

* *Recommendations:* (1) There is a need to formulate the procedure to conduct social audit.

(2) It was further suggested to constitute a Committee of the members of the gram sabha at the ward level to conduct social audit.

(3) To conduct social audit, a format may be designed and details of the project may be listed while initiating the project and after completion of the project it should publicise various modes like public notice and sharing of information in gram sabha, etc. Besides the format, the details of social audit i.e., indicators may be developed and they should be made public.

* *Issue of Transparency:* Various resource persons shared innovative practices in the panchayat system across the States.

* *Recommendations:* Among them the Institution of Ombudsman in the State of Kerala was highly appreciated.

(1) The Institution of Ombudsman as produced can take cognizance of any offence or misuse of public exchequer through complaints or even suo moto. The experiment in Kerala has produced some good results particularly elected representatives becoming careful while taking decisions. It was felt that the system of Ombudsman should be further strengthened and replicated in other States. It was also observed that there is a need to strengthen the Institution of Ombudsman, as also at district level and appellate tribunal should also be constituted for redressal of grievances and expedite the pending cases to get relief.

(2) Some States have already come up with citizen charter and the unit of governance is expected to provide services to the people on demand. This is more prevalent in the states of Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka than in other States, which have already

framed such citizen charter. This should further strengthen and make people aware about such charter in the State so that they can demand such services.

(3) Another important tool of good governance is e-governance to monitor the system to provide services to the people expeditiously. It was felt that in some States e-panchayat scheme has already been taken up. To computerise every panchayat in the State, the Government of India is already on this task. It was felt necessary that the system of e-panchayat should be extended to all panchayats in the country and it should be completed on time to enable maintenance of records at the gram panchayat level and provide better services delivery to the people.

(4) In Tamil Nadu, Internet Kiosks have been established at the districts under RASI project. Educated SHG members manage rural Access to Services through Internet. These Centres enable people from distant villages to send petitions to the district administration. These Centres provide information about government schemes to rural people and they forward grievances to concerned departments and help them apply for birth / death certificates, patta or citta documents, old age pension, etc. This effort has helped in better service delivery to rural people.

- * *Issue* : The workshop raised the issue of the capacity and awareness building of elected representatives and also the people in general.
- * *Recommendations*: (1) The orientation course should be given immediately after the Body is constituted soon after the election. Moreover, a necessity was felt to provide exposure visit for elected representatives. Under this programme, the elected representatives can be taken from one State to another to show the best practices available so that replication of such innovative and best practices can be considered in their area.

7. Operationalising Right to Information in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development Programmes

Introduction

This National Workshop was held with the objective of brainstorming and determining how best to take advantage of the newly enacted Right to Information Act (RTI) in order to make Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Rural Development (RD) programmes more participatory, accountable and effective. Another objective is also to share the experiences in implementing the Right to Information Act of the States and learn lessons for the new RTI. It was organised by NIRD with inputs from the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatana (MKSS) - which first raised the demand for Right to Information - and the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) – which drafted the Act and relentlessly promoted the cause. It was expected that this workshop would evolve a plan to start the process of developing materials (manuals and guidelines) on a project mode, to set in motion a process of issuing preliminary guidelines by concerned ministries by October 12, 2005 when the RTI Act becomes effective. It also expected to form a larger working group with the workshop participants as nucleus, to take this work forward in the states and all over the country in the coming months. Among the 26 workshop participants were Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey of MKSS and Shekhar Singh of NCPRI, senior government officials from RD, PR and other departments, activists, NGOs, scholars etc.

Objectives

1. To brainstorm and determine how best to take advantage of the newly enacted Right to Information Act in order to make Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Rural Development (RD) Programmes more participatory, accountable and effective in terms of :
 - a. Manuals, for the use of civil society groups, on how to use RTI in relation to various PRI and RD programmes.

- b. Guidelines, for use of PRIs and government agencies, on how to integrate transparency concerns in their existing and new programmes, perhaps by modifying the existing guidelines.
- c. For official agencies, guidelines on the information which they should keep readily available, on their own, in view of the RTI Act.
- d. Manuals and guidelines, both for civil society groups and government agencies, on strategies, processes and methods involved in conducting social audits for PRI and RD activities and programmes.
- e. There would also be a special focus on the soon to be enacted Employment Guarantee Act, in terms of the method by which its operation can be made transparent and publicly accountable.

Recommendations

1. Public authorities must be in a position to have available, and to provide information on RD schemes and for PRIs as required under the Act. To guide them it will be necessary to prepare small manuals / handbooks and also to issue suitable guidelines regarding their responsibilities. For the *suo moto* disclosure of such information generic manuals for the use of officials at the village, block, district and state levels are essential. Similarly the preparation of manuals / generic material for use by citizens and by activists groups/facilitators for the effective implementation of the RTI Act is also required. These tasks need to be taken up immediately, but will require to be suitably modified for each state.

Both these tasks can be coordinated by NIRD in collaboration with SIRDs, NCPRI / MKSS and Centre for Equity Studies.

2. The orientation of public functionaries and also of NGOs/facilitators on the operationalisation of the RTI Act in the context of RD schemes and PRIs is of critical importance. It would be appropriate to have regional meets for the purpose; it was

tentatively decided that these could be held at the SIRDs in Pune, Mysore, Kalyani in West Bengal, Guwahati (NERC) and Uttranchal. This could be coordinated by NIRD in collaboration with SIRDs, NCPRI and the meetings may be held before November.

3. Since YASHADA in Pune, Maharashtra already has experience on the RTI Act, and is, moreover the National Resource Centre for RTI, it could coordinate the training of the public functionaries.
4. The effective utilisation of the RTI Act for RD programmes and Panchayati Raj governance requires to be reinforced by social audit/public participation. This is a process, which needs to be initiated at the earliest and also to be continued on a sustained basis. This should be undertaken as a collaborative effort between the NIRD, SIRDs, activists groups, citizen groups, NGOs. The material and information collected in this process should be constantly utilised for refining the process of providing information for greater transparency and accountability.

This process will require to be carried forward in the States until such time as the operationalisation of the RTI Act stabilises. Support from the Ministry of Rural Development, the State Governments and the PRIs themselves will need to be provided.

5. Existing available material should be collated and compiled for use by government officials and public functionaries and by citizen groups/NGOs, activists. This task should be undertaken by YASHADA but supported by NCPRI, MKSS, NIRD and other organisations.
6. Certain tasks like the preparation of material, initiating the process in the villages, refining the handbooks/information through field testing etc., could be taken up as collaborative projects between NIRD and NCPRI/MKSS/Centre for Equity Studies. These could have two components; the first relating to the preparation of the material and information required for the

RTI Act for RD programmes and PRIs, and the second for initiating the process of social audit in the field.

7. A central advisory group could be formed by NIRD to coordinate and guide the process for the effective utilisation of the RTI Act for RD programmes. This could have representatives from the SIRDs/NGO Networks, NCPRI, Government institutions and so on.

An Overview of Issues

1. *Issue* : There is apprehension on the part of civil servants and also some resistance to adjust to the changed environment under the new RTI Act. Hence the issue is how we go about this process with less pain?

Recommendation : Now with the RTI Act there is access to the facts which would help making substantive and authentic statements. Yet, the information availed may be unwieldy and technical and hence various professionals like engineers, auditors, lawyers etc. from among the civil society need to join together to decipher the language and content perhaps illegible to even the literates.

Issue : Since PRI and RD straightaway affects rural people, it is very important to see the RTI application to these two spheres.

Recommendations : So there is a need to evolve mechanisms that can facilitate proper use of Right to Information in the form of manuals and guidelines and institutionalise the experiences of various groups, rules, laws and guidelines. The Section 4 of the Act requirement spells *suo moto* transparency as the public authority must furnish the details about itself as per this section.

Issues : The workshop assessed that the government may have to, as per RTI Act, appoint about 350 posts in the Information Commission at the Centre as well as the States. An apprehension was aired over creating a new bureaucracy with superannuated bureaucrats occupying these or CIOs/PIOs' posts. Of course

PIOs/CIOs are high status positions without extra remuneration. It was observed that often judges in their last two years of services give pro-government judgment in the hope of getting post-retirement positions. So, what is needed is to avoid another overbearing bureaucracy and appointment of biased judges. It was felt that induction of activists, persons from movement and civil society in the Commission may check such tilts to some extent. One of the suggestion was to strengthen Lok Ayukta following Karnataka's example where Lok Ayukta is doing reasonably well and ombudsman mechanism for PRI to assist Lok Ayukta is also planned in Karnataka.

Recommendations : The records of Jan Sunwai and such public hearings should be part of local level audit. Even when Jan Sunwai evidences are available today, accountability of the government is still very hazy.

There was a doubt that the Act is not clear whether one can go in appeal to Central Information Commission against a decision of a State Information Commission. Someone explained that the Commission prevents citizens from going to lower courts but one can go to the High Court. As of now, there are three sets of States i) States with RTI Act, ii) States without RTI Act, iii) Some States want to repeal the State RTI Act. And then what happens if the State RTI Act continues?

Another apprehension is that some people may use the BPL persons who are exempt from the fee with the application seeking some information. A suggestion was that such exemption should be only for the information at the local level and affecting himself/herself or family and not something that is related to the entire block or above.

The RTI will help the victim of human rights violation at the police stations as under RTI, he/she has right to information about the basis for the detention in the lock-up and methods of

interrogation. The forum felt that women would use the RTI better and they must be made aware of and educated on RTI.

It was also agreed that '*suo moto*' information should be made available regarding minimum wages, schools, teachers, attendants etc. But the types of *suo moto* information need to be defined. For Rural Development, for example: basic information should be on 1) Beneficiary related schemes, 2) Area development schemes, 3) Social security schemes, 4) Wage employment schemes and 5) Basic civic amenities programmes. It needs to qualify and quantify how beneficiaries are selected and see what BPL criteria are adopted.

There was an apprehension that RTI Act may trigger off violence because distribution of spoils is disrupted. *Suo Moto* declaration may reduce this risk quite a bit. In this content, the Andhra Pradesh has promoted community reports – to bring out monthly magazines to publish information on what is happening with reference to each programme / scheme. Their way of reporting is quite different from official report and therefore may bring about transparency. Another step in the state is total transfer of responsibility / power to select beneficiaries from officials to community based organisations. This has created an enabling environment where invoking RTI is feasible without any difficulty.

NIRD has prepared information booklets for seven separate schemes along with PR institutions. The manuals could be improved by incorporating what development functionaries and beneficiaries need to know and how this information can be used in the context of RTI Act.

The information should be on the basis of 1) What problems people face in the way schemes are implemented, 2) What are relevant rules to solve those, 3) How RTI can help in it and 4) People should know how beneficiaries are selected. People's concerns should be integrated in legal and administrative process.

Group Discussions on Manuals and Guidelines for the Government

For discussion on manuals and guidelines, the workshop agreed upon Approach and Process through 1) Schemes and Programmes, 2) Official Institutions, 3) Social Audits, 4) Training.

Schemes and Programmes : The discussion focused on PRI run rural development programmes that were classified as beneficiary oriented, works oriented, social security related and land based schemes and considered parameters like criteria, process and transparency. BPL list being most important, selection should be transparent. These should be widely publicised and must be displayed at all Panchayat levels. Bulky guidelines by the government need to be reduced in readable, easy pamphlet like small manuals.

Work related guidelines should list works, criteria for selection, its specification, minimum wages, work and agency selection criteria, work condition, inspection and right of people check on sample bans, documents for inspection (measurement book, SSR / MSR / payment books) etc. While works may be categorised for display on all Panchayats, entire details may be displayed at the work site. PDS and social security related information such as ration cards, quantum received, distributed by the ration shop, old age pension payment etc. should be released to the press and local radio too.

Institutions : Institutional details such as functions of patwaris, services provided, fees charged, etc. and similarly that of other functionaries like extension worker/ teacher should be listed and made available. List of medicines to PHCs, last mutation record of land, village map with land allotment etc. should be available.

Social Audits: Social audit of rural infrastructure such as hand pumps, schools, panchayat bhavan, should be made necessary. Panchayats must maintain assets register. Documents to be audited in social audit should be made available for inspection 15 days in advance. Attendance in Jan Sunwai should be made mandatory for district official.

Training : The training has to be given to 1) PIOs, 2) Appellate Authority, 3) Public Authority, 4) Media and NGOs, 5) Citizens. YASHADA has prepared modules for all these which can be shared with other States.

Discussions on Manuals and guidelines - for the Civil Society

The group discussed various suggestions listed below:

- * Divide the poor into social groups, identify their problems and link them to relevant schemes and then the access to / use of RTI.
- * Means of and control over resources (e.g. Common Property Resource) – access, rights / livelihood.
- * General overview of what is RTI and what is its use – area, scope and sphere for each category of stakeholders. The proposed manual / guidelines is to tell people the possibilities to pursue change.
- * RTI is about building hopes, empowerment and mobilisation. RTI is a necessary condition but not sufficient condition for empowerment.
- * In respect of PRIs, their roles and functions and relevance of RTI to PRI as an institution, its responsibilities should be made clear with reference to each function within its control / ambit. PRI as a focus however, may have a problem because of variation across the states. This has to be kept in mind.
- * The proposed manual/guideline should clear the misapprehension / resistance / fear that RTI is to fix officials but an empowering process.

General Recommendations

- * Regional meet may be organised within the next 2-3 months in each region with SIRD hosting such meets. A time bound Action

Plan should be evolved in these meets. Besides general issues of RTI, each meet may focus on a specific issue of RD & PRI. To begin with the regional meets may be organised in Guwahati, Utharanchal and Karnataka.

- * Existing and available material should be collated and compiled with relevant additions. NIRD's generic material should be used for further suitable addition.
- * In training, YASHADA should take a lead as National Resource Centre for RTI training. It should conduct training of trainers programme (TOT) where SIRDs should send their trainees. Training modules developed by YASHADA and other institutions should be put together and shared.
- * This workshop participants may form a nucleus group and smaller groups with specific tasks like manual and guideline preparation can be done.
- * NIRD should take the lead in keeping the momentum and also coordinate an e-mail discussion forum group. To begin with this can start with the core group and can be expanded as we progress.
- * Workout schedule to orient State governments and NGOs in RD and PRI by taking series of workshops more focused on these issues.
- * Government should provide transparency and hence provide information *suo moto*. It is necessary to evolve plan for its content, mode of delivery, its format and maintenance of this information.
- * Information on response and queries should be collected periodically with respect to – i) record keeping and management, ii) response process and mechanism, iii) follow up, iv) assessment. This will enable to find out what sort of information is sought and if it is frequently sought, it will help us to move it to *suo moto* list.

- * Evolve methods for NGOs – how they should use RTI for transparency.
- * Develop manuals for civil societies and in local languages.
- * Work with organisations like NCPRI, MKSS, Parivartan etc. who have experience in social audit. Groups of people should collectively assess government programmes and one way is Jan Sunwai. Evolve social audit guidelines based on which organise a Jan Sunwai as a testing ground along with government functionaries.
- * Media should be involved at each stage and process. Citizens should know about such social audit / Jan Sunwai being held.
- * NIRD may organise experimental Jan Sunwai across the country as training-cum-social audit with the government agencies as partners.
- * A week may be declared for ‘national rally’ to file complaints / seek information using RTI immediately after notification of Act.
- * A Central Advisory Group to be formed with representatives from CES, NIRD, SIRD, NGO network, Government representatives etc.

GENERAL

8. Psycho-Social Support to Tsunami Affected Communities

Objectives

1. To provide platform for the participants who are using their knowledge and expertise to help the affected communities in coping with emotional stress.
2. To share their experiences to evolve better and comprehensive strategies to redress post traumatic stress.
3. To promote net-working across individuals and agencies to enhance the social capital available for psycho-social intervention in disaster rehabilitation.

Altogether 43 participants, mostly NGOs, few officials, academicians, psychiatrist and clinical psychologist involved in psycho-social support care from Tsunami affected States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, U.T. of Pondicherry and other areas attended the workshop .

Issues – I : Community mobilisation through Self Help efforts for Trauma affected persons with special reference to women, children, orphans and the elderly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Community Support : The community support was present in various forms in most affected areas. However, it needs to be further strengthened by the coordinated action of various agencies *viz.* Government, NGOs, UN, Red Cross, religious, cultural, and political organisations which have a great influence in several areas.

2. Organisations: It is recommended that available community based organisations may be approached to take up some of the recommended activities.

3. ‘Major activities’ identified were material relief, health care including immunisation, water and sanitation, psycho-social support, training in disaster management and EDP, information and communication regarding various services such as hospitals, relief availability, rebuilding of housing, livelihood measures (boats, nets), alternative livelihood options (agriculture, livestock etc.), basic infrastructure such as roads, schools, community halls, places of worship, anganwadis, PHCs, economic activities including micro credit, bank loans and marketing, cultural and entertainment activities, ensuring continuity of education for children – scholarships for orphan children and spiritual activities as a means of comfort and solace.

4. *Psycho-social Support*: The group recommended activities such as identification of persons in need of emotional and psychological support, counseling and emotional support for individuals and families, medical treatment if required, mobilising social support through neighbors/friend/community/religious leaders and follow-up.

5. *Special Groups Children* : Children are vulnerable if they are not offered timely help and it can lead to emotional scaring which can affect their life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identification of the problems by talking to parents, family, teachers, classmates and friends and enlist their help; quick survey of all the children to identify psychological ill effects;
2. Use of a scale to assess severity of the condition (mild/moderate/severe);
3. Interventions : recreational activities, games and sports, drama and music, story telling, drawing, teaching life skills; Emphasis on sending them back to school at the earlier;
4. Formation of groups – child friendly;
5. Use of traditional methods, yoga and alternative systems;

6. Orphans especially girls should be protected against exploitation and trafficking;
7. Emotional stress after displacement experienced by orphaned children should be immediately attended to. Such children could be living in children's homes or with relatives;
8. Continuity of education through scholarships;
9. Adoption centres be located closer to their original homes;
10. Special efforts for female orphan children, disabled children, children born after Tsunami need to be assessed;

Women : The basic needs identified for women to be attended are shelter and emotional support if their husband is out of job, help with financial commitments including previously taken loans and harassment by moneylender, availability of cooking utensils, household articles. Women also faced the problems from alcoholic men in their families due to infections (HIV, Gastroenteritis).

Recanalisation facilities may be provided to such women who lost all their children. It was also felt that a destitute home for single women should be started in affected areas.

Elderly : The elderly in disaster areas have special problems such as feeling loneliness, ignored, neglected by the family and community. They also have a lot of guilt about survival and insecurity about future. These emotional needs should be attended to. It was also felt that economic support may be provided through 'tsunami pensions'. Some areas require 'old age homes'.

Youth : The group recommended that the youth, both men and women need to be categorised as Rural / Urban / Student/ Non-Student / Disabled youth. It was felt that considering the tremendous potential of youth in relating to the community, they need to be encouraged to form youth groups. Some of these groups have already responded in the tsunami-hit areas. They should be trained as counselor, members of Disaster Management Team, as watch-dogs to monitor on-going activities.

General Recommendations : Need assessment to be made before any intervention; create a data base of affected persons and relief activities in every area. This will prevent duplication of efforts by several NGOs and other organisation in the field; providing ID cards for survivors; galvanise already existing self help groups of women and men; shelters and scholarships for orphans and women; Disaster Management Cells, Modules and Guidelines be in place.

Research : Identify the most vulnerable groups ; assess the felt- needs and the extent of fulfillment of these needs of the affected persons ; intersect- oral collaboration during disaster and effectiveness of various training programmes.

Issues – II : Role of Government and Civil Societies in Psycho-social Support – Road Map

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The group recognises the role of both the government and civil societies in provision of psycho–social support as well as rehabilitation in disasters for rebuilding of the social fabric. This needs to be complimentary, coordinated and supportive to each other on a long-term basis.
2. The government should continue to regulate, facilitate and channelise psycho-social rehabilitation activities by the civil society at the State and district level.
3. Outsourcing of psycho-social care, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction to start in a small way so that specialised players in this area can develop and could be supplement and alternative to governmental efforts in times to come.
4. The psycho-social rehabilitation should be included and become a part and parcel of rehabilitation and reconstruction process.
5. Psycho-social care need to be an integral part of the spectrum of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities like housing, livelihood, health, compensation, and legal assistance.

6. Considering that psycho-social care being a relatively newer area, there is a need for sensitisation, net working and inter-sectoral collaboration of all stakeholders like governments' line departments, Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs, Banks and so on.
7. Proactive measures to build awareness on the role of psycho-social care in the community for all stress related situations and thereby improve the 'quality of life'.
8. Establish a 'National Centre for Psycho-social Support ' and identify zonal resource centres for training among existing mental health institutions / disaster mitigation institutions.
9. The State Government to appoint qualified district level psycho-social support officers for provision and coordination of regular psycho-social care as well as rehabilitation activities. The activities of these professionals to be coordinated by a State level cell to be headed by a specialist in the field of psycho-social care.
10. Organisation, training and monitoring of Community Level Workers at the scale of one CLW per 25 families.
11. There is a need for standardised and validated capacity building material to be compiled and made available by psycho-social care nodal centres with inputs from civil society experiences, indigenous technical knowledge and religious scholars.
12. Provision of caring of career need to be an inbuilt strategy for both the government and the civil society personnel involved in disaster rehabilitation and rebuilding.
13. Drills and exercises should be devised for disaster preparedness which should be inclusive of the 'psychological first aid' for emotional reactions. This could avoid panic reactions during warnings and alarms.

14. To operationalise various recommendations a committee may be appointed to specify assignment of responsibilities, procedures etc.

Issues – III : Facilities for Training Counselors and other stakeholders

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Disaster Management Cell : It is recommended that in every State, there is a need to establish 'Disaster Management Cell' under the nodal implementing department, comprising of core group of members headed by suitable officers and with representation from different related departments, mental health institutions and NGOs. The main role of this cell would be to undertake overall planning, implementation and networking.

Similarly, at the district level there should be a 'core disaster management group' comprising of designated officers who will coordinate, monitor and network with members from allied fields. Taking this as a base, in the same way, at the community level there should be a 'core group of disaster management unit' who will not only implement the present tsunami related psycho-social support activities but also help in any natural calamity and man made disaster in future suitable representation need to be made from the CBOs as core members of the community disaster management unit.

2. Training Module : The social welfare department of Tamil Nadu has developed a module for Training of Trainer and CLWs . The other States can take advantage of these available modules.

3. Establishing Community Psycho-social Support Cell : It has been noted that some of the NGOs and self-financing educational institutions including Polytechnic colleges running counseling centres. It is proposed to establish a number of such 'counseling units' in the primary and secondary schools, junior colleges and polytechnic colleges situated in eastern coast to undertake counseling activities for the tsunami survivors and school students. The already existing units, can be strengthened with academic and technical support from

different organisations including organisations having expertise in mental health area. These units need to be managed by the trained CLWs along with the teachers of that particular school or educational institution.

3. *Community Preparedness* : Guideline documents as how to cope with natural calamities and man made disaster needs to be made available in all ‘psycho-social support units’. The psycho-social support unit should also have panel of experts, consisting of psychiatrists, clinical and educational psychologists, social workers, representatives of NGOs, doctors and volunteers who can render help and services to the local people.

4. *Institute of Disaster Management* : It is recommended to start a separate institute of disaster management at the State level. It is envisaged that this Institute would train, equip and upgrade various skills, knowledge and competencies in managing disaster to the people those who are already working in this area, and who are expected to contribute in this area. Personnel working in Government Institutions, NGOs and private sectors could be trained for managing future disasters through short term and long term training programmes.

5. *NIRD Research* : National Institute of Rural Development being a nodal body in the country for rural development with huge infrastructure facilities (both human and material) can undertake research studies in collaboration with Institutions like NIMHANS, NITTTR-Chennai, United Nations Agencies, NGOs, Universities, Medical Colleges and Professional Bodies.

9. Seminar on Gender Issues in Human Settlement

Introduction

Gender Issues in Human Settlements have been the concern of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (UNCHS) and the National Government for quite some time. Policies and programmes to address the gender issues are being taken up in the field of employment, education, food security, HIV/AIDS, violence against women, decision making, land and property rights, water, sanitation, infrastructure etc. Despite different enabling policies and programmes, gender inequality in India continues to be one of the salient features of the society. Women lag behind men in most of the critical indicators of human development, and poverty which is on rise. It is a matter of deep concern that the sex ratio i.e., the number of women per 1000 men has been decreasing over the years. In 1991, there were only 927 women per 1000 men and in 2001 this figure rose to 933.

Less than 40 per cent of the 330 million women aged 7 and above are literate, which means that over 200 millions are illiterate women in the country. School enrolment rate also reduces considerably from primary level to secondary level and above, for boys as well as girls but more so for girls. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families' lives and on countries economic development.

Health of women is another important factor in determining the overall health of the society. If pregnant women are not well nourished they are more likely to give birth to weaker babies which increases the higher infant mortality rate. In 2000 the infant mortality rate of female is 69 per 1000 against male infant mortality rate of 67 per 1000.

Collecting water from long distances has been exclusively women's work in rural areas. They spend most of time fetching water. Thus progress on water and sanitation is essential for empowering

women, and their involvement in designing, operating and managing water and sanitation facilities is key to their sustainable use.

So a Seminar was organised by Centre for Gender Studies to address the gender issues in the areas of Education, Health, Employment and Drinking Water on following aspects:

- * Gender Issues in Rural Settlements;
- * Measure adopted to address different gender issues;
- * Role of Community, Government and Voluntary Organisations in addressing different gender issues; and
- * Lessons learnt from the past experiences and recommendations for tackling the gender issues effectively.

Thirty six participants from 6 States participated in the Seminar at the level of Medical, Panchayat Raj, Women and Child Welfare, Education and Employment Departments of Government and from NGOs and Universities. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Block Development Officers, CDPOs, District Education Officers, RWS Engineers, District Employment Officers, research scholars and Professors from Universities, programme coordinators from NGOs also attended the Seminar.

Sub Themes

Sub themes and the issues identified under each sub theme were as follows :

HEALTH

- * Women are exposed to peculiar and major health problems due to child bearing;
- * Girls experience higher rate of mortality while they are younger as compared to boys;
- * Women in the productive age group are suffering from some form of anemia;
- * High maternal mortality rate.

DRINKING WATER

- * Women and the girls carry the burden of fetching water from long distances along with other workload;
- * Women and girls are exposed to increased risk of sexual harassment / assault while gathering water from distance and isolated places.

EDUCATION

- * Female literacy rate is only 54 per cent when compared to male literacy i.e. 75 per cent;
- * Enrolment rate among girls is lower when compared to boys in primary, secondary level and above;
- * Dropout rates in different levels of school education are more for girls as compared to boys;
- * There is gender difference in preference of subject.

EMPLOYMENT

- * Wide difference in the participation of men and women in the economy;
- * Proportion of women employees is higher in private sector;
- * Women main workers concentrate in primary sector;
- * Gender based differences of choice and opportunities in various occupations; and
- * Gender discrimination prevails in the average daily wages.

Recommendations

Health

- * HIV infected women need immediate assistance because of extra social discrimination. There is need for exclusive rehabilitation centres for women with trained female staff.

- * Studies have proved that marriage is risky specially for rural women. The six most AIDS affected States in India should take a lead in regulating marriages by complying with the Supreme Court's orders to frame rules for the Registration of Marriages. The solemnisation and registration should go together and an HIV test report should be a pre-condition for solemnisation.
- * ICDS centres can also identify the nutritional deficient female adolescents and give them nutritional supplement along with iron tablets.
- * Efforts should be made to promote wearing of slippers by females/children to prevent a major cause of anemia viz. worm infestation.
- * Punishment under PNDT Act should be more stringent and transparent.
- * The NSV should be taken up in a campaign mode (like pulse polio) to promote male participation in the FP programme.
- * Violation of minimum age of marriage should be made cognisable offence.
- * ASHA under RCH-II should be trained and retrained to play the envisaged role in reducing IMR/MMR as per the targets of MDGs.

Drinking Water

- * Rain water should be harvested.
- * Sense of ownership is very much important, as SHGs excel in all fields and they should be involved in drinking water supply programmes.
- * Women were planners and providers of water and also suffer during water crisis, so women should be involved in drinking water planning.

- * By better access to water and sanitation, conflicts can be reduced.
- * To involve women in water and sanitation planning, gender analysis should be done.

Education

- * Parents, community leaders, officials and non-officials should make concerted efforts and sustain propaganda for cent per cent enrolments of girls in Class – I.
- * The phenomenon of dropouts should be tackled by provision of incentives – mid day meals, free school uniforms, scholarships/ stipends, free supply of books and study materials etc.
- * At least 50 per cent of the teachers at the elementary level should be women.

Employment

- * Create gender sensitive working living conditions at work site.
- * To provide a social platform for women employed in the informal sector by organising them into unions.
- * To identify and address the critical needs of poor working women like credit, social security, and training for leadership, skill, and exposure visits.
- * Trade unions should facilitate poor women in the social action process i.e. to fight for labour, equal wages etc.
- * Provide social security programme for life, disability and health aspects.
- * Provide avenues for self-employment.

10. Community Resource Management with Special Reference to North East India

Common Property Resources (CPR) mainly in the form of agriculture land and forests resources have always played a key role in the socio-economic organisation of community life in the tribal villages of India since times immemorial. One basic factor behind the existence and continuance of CPR in the tribal areas is the mode of societal organisation and mode of resource management. Over the years, however, due to policy interventions of various nature starting from the British in the 19th Century and continuing till date by government the nature of the property relation has been changing in the most of the states, particularly in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Thus while the interventions have resulted in faster economic development, it has also resulted in landlessness and land alienation and shrinking forest base. The shrinking base of CPR also means non-accessibility of productive resources to the poor and has in number of instances led to land and environmental degradation. In view of this background a national workshop on Community Resources Management with Special Reference to North East India was organised at NIRD, NERC from 9-11 May, 2005 with following objectives :

Objectives

- * To deliberate upon the livelihood pattern of the rural poor with a view to understanding their dependency on various environmental resources, including the common property resources.
- * To assess the impact of development interventions, especially agriculture and rural development programmes on access to CPRs by poor.
- * To assess the importance of the traditional cultural practices, rights, institutional arrangements and customary laws governing the management and usages of CPR.

- * To suggest ways to prevent privatisation of CPRs, land alienation, and resource degradation.

Issues

North East Region is the home of 354 tribes and sub tribes, living there since time immemorial with their rich heritages and autochthonous cultures distinct to each community. The main issues are related to land alienation, agriculture and indebtedness and subsistence traditional farming.

Recommendations

1. Village Councils of the tribal areas of the states of North East India should be empowered to control over the management of land resources.
2. All the fairs and festivals relating to agricultural productivity should be encouraged and for this the mindset of the tribal people should be fine tuned. The Village Councils should take a leading role in this regard.
3. In case of developmental activities, continuing or to be continued in future, in the tribal areas, Human Resource Development (HRD) at local level should be augmented. This initiative is again to be taken by the village council backed by the education departments (technical and general) of respective states of the region and which should also be supported by the departments of tribal welfare of the states as well as the Central Government.
4. The development efforts of government in North East have met with limited success mainly because the government efforts have failed to involve the local communities and interventions were based on central government or Government of India parameters and these parameters failed in North East. Moreover the assets created out of the government policies and programmes were not maintained due to changing pattern of these programmes. The changing pattern led to change in government priorities and change in government guidelines.

5. The thrust of all government policies and programmes should be on large-scale awareness and sensitization.
6. The local communities and representatives of local self-government should be involved in deciding about the nature of the programmes to be implemented at the grassroots level and the role of Government of India or/and respective State government should confine to financing and monitoring. This should lead to a change in the present pattern of sponsored development to a pattern of development based on a sense of ownership and in conformity with the cultural/ecological heritage at the same time.
7. The implementing agencies need to be different from the present set up of government departments, DRDA, Block Offices and selected NGOs. Although, genuine NGOs can still be involved institutions such as SIRDs, universities etc. should be actively involved in the interventions.
8. The micro plans should be need based. The local communities should be involved in proper identification of needs. It is postulated that local communities would be highly successful in preserving and maintaining the CPRs once they are sensitised and involved in the planning process.
9. The traditional systems of making outlets for water from small hills, maintenance of ponds etc. need to be strengthened instead of imposing development on NE region.

DEVELOPMENT OF VULNERABLE SECTIONS

11. Non–Wood Forest Produce (NWFP) Policy

Objectives

The Workshop was intended to build on further thinking and action on concretising the national/regional policy framework promoting forest-based livelihoods.

- a) To create a regional federation for market development and support to the forest dwellers,
- b) Collaborative research and development for value addition of NWFP and transfer of skills and technology to the primary collectors and producers,
- c) Mutual help and cooperation for growth and development of forest based industries and employment in Central India and
- d) minimum support price for NWFP and creation of fund for procurement and trade.

The workshop was attended by 54 participants who represented Central Government and State Governments, MFP Federations, NGOs and others.

I. Issue : Resource Conservation

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * It is essential to identify the potential areas for future conservation and management based on high, medium and low productive areas in terms of NWFP.
- * The priority species and their produce can be identified for these areas so as to regulate their yield and to initiate conservation efforts to protect threatened species and to improve the productivity.

- * The results of efforts made by the Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in conservation of NWFP rich areas through “People's Protected Areas” can be shared with other States.

II. Issue : Resource Assessment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * Identification of the species and preparation of inventory of both wood and non-wood forest produce;
- * Identification of the target species for conservation and sustainable harvesting and estimating sustainable yield; and
- * The inventory techniques for NWFP are to be standardised for achieving the desired objectives. The experience of Chhattisgarh and SFRI, Jabalpur can be utilised in formulating the guidelines. The same can be documented and circulated in the next workshop. The Forest Survey of India can take a lead role for drafting a uniform procedure throughout the country.

III. Issue : Non-Destructive Harvesting

RECOMMENDATIONS

- * Each State shall prioritise 10 most important NWFPs of tree origin and 10 most important NWFPs of shrub/climber, herb origin.
- * Each State may select at least two products under each category for standardising the good collection practices involving the experts. This is proposed to be decided in the next workshop.
- * These collection practices can be implemented on pilot scale through capacity building of primary cooperative societies, joint forest management committees, self-help groups and primary collectors of the forest produce.

IV. Issues : Cultivation

- * Each State shall prioritise 5 most important NWFP of tree origin native to the State and five most important NWFP of shrub/ timber, herb origin, which are not available in the forest in sufficient quantity in the state to meet market demand. It is advised not to follow projected figures as floated through media or Internet.
- * Each State shall select different herbaceous medicinal plants to have State monopoly and to prevent market gluts.
- * Identify the potential areas in the state for the cultivation of the above produce.

V. Issues : Value Addition

- * Value addition of NWFPs can play a major role in creation of additional employment to the rural poor. Each State should focus on value addition of priority species.
- * The States can exchange the successful attempts in terms of value addition of NWFP for implementation. The documentation of above attempts can be done and circulated in the next workshop.
- * Each State shall identify 5 NWFP for development of standard protocols for value addition with the help of experts. The species and items can be different for different States to avoid duplication of efforts.
- * Successful pilot projects can be expanded in the State and region by sharing of information.

VI. Issue : Marketing

A. NATIONALISED NWFP

Recommendation

- * There should be a uniform regional policy for the trade of nationalised NWFP. This will require:

- * A regional centre having the market information of all the regional States. To begin with M.P.M.F.P. Federation can be selected.
- * Uniformity in sale procedure and conditions and tax structure.
- * Uniformity in collection/procurement prices of NWFP and the variation in purchase rates in neighbouring States creates the problem of illegal movement of MFP from one State to another State.

B. Issue : Non-Nationalised NWFP

- * Each state shall prioritise 5 NWFP of tree origin and 5 NWFP of climber, shrub/herb origin for GCP and value addition.
- * Each State shall market the products produced by JFM committees/MFP Cooperative Societies through a unique brand name. These products can be marketed through sale outlets of neighbouring States through a regional brand name, if needed.
- * A chain of sale outlets on the pattern of Sanjeevani of Madhya Pradesh may be set up for the marketing of these products in each state. MP MFP Federation shall distribute detailed notes on functioning and structure of Sanjeevani network in the next Workshop.

VII. Issue : Research and Development

Recommendation

- * State Governments / MOEF/ ICFRE, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, GOI should launch special drive with huge incentives to invite entrepreneurs to establish quality testing laboratories in each agro-climatic regions of the State. The labs will provide testing facility to the MFP organisation/traders of the produce with a view to ensuring that the tested produce fetch higher remunerative prices.

- * MFP Federations/STDCs should get adequate budgetary support for undertaking studies and implementation of extensive activities for technology transfer.

VIII. Issue : Management Information System

Recommendation

- * Each State/organisation should establish a separate MIS cell for providing reliable database. The MIS cell should produce database on
 - * Important NWFP, yield, production areas
 - * Information on trade of NWFP
 - * Trader's directory
 - * Directory of cultivators of NWFP species
 - * Processing units and Manufacturing industries

IX. Issue : Technical Support – Technology Transfer

Recommendation

- * Each State should earmark part of its budget for technical support and technology transfer. Uniform and simple guidelines can be prepared for hiring technical services of experts. Regional coordination cell should shortlist experts/expert organisations with the help of the regional States.
- * Each State should focus on capacity building of SHGs, JFM committees and primary Minor Forest Produce Coop. societies through transfer of technology to the grassroot level. Each organisation should come up with its plan on pilot basis, the results of which can be shared in regional workshops.

X. Issue : Traditional Knowledge

Recommendation

- * Each State should document the traditional knowledge on use and conservation of NWFP.

- * National Medicinal Plant Board should provide budgetary support for the same to undertake the studies besides facilitating institutional support.
- * Each State should prepare the list of traditional healers and diseases, purpose of treatment.

XI. Issue : Role of Organisations of Government of India

Recommendation

- * Relevant Ministries of Government of India should provide adequate financial assistance to MFP federations
- * NSTFDC should provide soft loans to the MFP federations.

XII. Issue : National Policy on NWFP

Recommendation

Policy on NWFP require a vibrant Policy and it should cover the following:

- * Conservation
- * Collection and Cultivation
- * Processing and value addition
- * Marketing
- * Research and Development
- * Finance

12. Food Security for Poor

The National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad has organised a high level National Consultation on *Food Security for Poor* during 27-29 June, 2005. The Consultation addressed the important issues concerning food security of the poor in the backdrop of recent policy changes and its implementation.

Food Production and Consumption Pattern

Issues : (1) Changes in the pattern of food consumption from cereals to non-cereal items and also change in the consumption pattern from coarse cereals to fine cereals in rural and urban areas. (2) Pricing and procurement mechanism for small producers. (3) Perishable nature of non-cereal products like vegetables and fruits etc. (4) Deficiency in institutional credit mechanism.

Recommendations

1. Public investment must be encouraged in medium, minor and micro irrigation in dry and rainfed areas.
2. Promote and encourage production and consumption of coarse cereals in rainfed areas.
3. Policy emphasis on the production of non-cereal food items like vegetables, fruits, oilseeds, poultry products, sea food, meat, milk etc., based on agro climatic regional planning.
4. If organised credit institutions fail to provide and if the peasants fail to provide secure collateral efforts should be made to enhance the provision of credit in the rural areas.

Procurement

Issues : (1) No price support mechanism and procurement for the crops grown by small and marginal farmers specially the coarse grains in dry and rainfed conditions. (2) Decentralisation of procurement.

Recommendations

The procurement operations should be extended to areas where procurement operations are non-existent at present and should cover coarse grains also. There is need to workout decentralised procurement, storage and distribution system.

Employment Programmes and Food Security

Issues : (1) Wage employment programmes provide employment to workers particularly in the slack season. (2) This will enhance purchasing power to obtain foodgrains either from PDS or from the market. (3) This will in turn contribute towards food security and improved nutritional levels.

Recommendations

1. Beneficiary committees to be formed to implement wage employment works.
2. These committees need some support (technical, financial, capacity building, etc.) from agencies such as NGOs, administrators which needs attention.
3. Micro plan needs to be prepared, and beneficiary committees to be formed under GP to find the situation, assess needs and formulate an action plan
4. Devolution of functions, functionaries and finances as per the action plan.
5. Sub-committee of GP on wage employment with representatives of beneficiary committees, and political and administrators as members.
6. 40 per cent of expenditure on natural resource management (including soil and water conservation) should be mandatory; but, flexibility to GPs having more pressing needs relating to roads, etc.

7. Develop checks and balances and check leakages.
8. Specify what activities of Natural Resource Management can be tangible, and how to achieve this.
9. Monitor the expenditure and soil and water conservation works of GPs.

Cooperation between Panchayats and CBOs : Involvement of SHGs in wage employment work will minimise corruption and check diversion of foodgrains at the village level.

PDS and other Welfare Schemes

Issues : (1) Need for raise in the income level of BPL and to increase the coverage. (2) Viability of fair-price shop. (3) Irregularity in arrival and distribution of food items through fair-price shops. (4) Lack of transparency in operation and maintenance of fair-price shops. (5) Leakages in quantity and quality of PDS items while transporting. (6) Improper selection and targeting of beneficiary. (7) Issue of ration card only to male member in each family has created problems for poor people. (8) Coverage of PDS is confined to limited food items.

Recommendations

1. Income level for availing BPL card should be increased and APL families should be excluded from this programme.
2. Fair-price shops should be multi-commodity shops and should not keep competitive products. The SHGs, NGOs should be given priority. Unemployed youths could be considered if these groups are not available.
3. Supply of food items should be ensured in first week in fair-price shops.
4. Price list and stock list should be displayed by these shops and they should be answerable to panchayats.

5. To check leakages in quantity and quality, while transporting PDS items, a reputed and large operator should be employed. Selection of this large operator should be done through technical as well as in open bid.
6. Civil Supply Corporation should pass on its margin partially to fair-price shops to make them economically viable.
7. Let there be a food coupon schemes for better targeting.
8. Food coupon will be issued to those who are entitled and are in need in it. A committee comprising BPL members of the PRI should supervise in preparing BPL list.
9. BPL cards should be in both husband and wife's name.
10. The PDS scheme should also distribute pulses etc. (at least 10 per cent of total foodgrain) for a more balanced diet for poor.

Mid-day meals – *Issues*: (1) No proper infrastructure for providing food in the schools. (2) No facility for safe drinking water.

Recommendations

1. Proper kitchen should be provided to the schools and it should be away from the school building to avoid fire incident.
2. Safe drinking water facility should be provided for safe-food.

ICDS – *Issue* : Quantity provided under ICDS is inadequate.

Recommendations

1. Both the frequency and quantity of food should be increased provided under the scheme.
2. If possible combine mid-day meal and ICDS scheme for better efficiency and outcome.

Community Initiatives

Issues : (1) Several basic functional units for providing various schemes of food security at the village level. (2) Gram Sabha is not

empowered for localised production and procurement of foodgrains (3) No mechanism to monitor the functioning of FPS. (4) Neglecting the role of CPRs and cultivable fallows to cater the food security needs of the people. (5) No proper marketing channels for MFP being collected by the primary collectors at village level. (6) Increase in the cultivation of chemical fertilisers based mono cropping leading to ecological unsustainability. (7) Creation of employment opportunities at village level. (8) No proper storage structures nor adequate training is given for maintaining them. (9) Inadequate capacity building for CBOs / SHGs.

Recommendations

1. Gram Sabha should be the basic functional unit for delivering or rather any kind of benefit through various schemes of food security at the village level (especially in case of selection of beneficiary monitoring and functionalisation).
2. Gram Sabha should be given the power for localised production procurement of food grains.
3. Further, Gram Sabha should be given the power to allocate and monitor the FPS which in turn can be allocated to CBOs, SHGs on priority basis.
4. The community level initiative can address itself to the development of all CPRs including land and water bodies ensuring optimum production and allocation of benefits which can be divided by the Gram Sabha.
5. Augmentation, a regeneration of CPRs with the help of villagers can be undertaken by the Government to cater to the need of food and nutritional security of vulnerable people.
6. Cultivable fallow land, if any, can be developed by involving landless families and usufruct rights can be given to them.
7. Gram Sabha can be entrusted with the responsibility of creating proper marketing channel for minor forest produce being

collected by the primary collectors to ensure adequate remuneration for proper monitoring of minor forest produce by the government in consultation with panchayats.

8. Forest as a resource of food, supplementary and complimentary source of food should be taken care of by the forest department in participation with the village community participating in tribal areas.
9. Bio-diversity based organic farming should be promoted in order to ensure nutritional security with ecological sustainability.
10. Promotion of bio-products with the community initiative can generate employment opportunity at the village level.
11. Grain banks with traditional storage skills at the village or community level should be supported and strengthened where they exist and adequate training for that purpose can be provided by the government where they do not exist.
12. Further, wealth mapping of the community can be done by the gram sabha or CPO or any gram panchayat which is managing a particular grain bank and quotas to different families can be allocated accordingly.
13. Life skill education can be integrated into the formal education at appropriate levels.

Elimination of Hunger

IDENTIFICATION OF HUNGER ZONES

Measurable Indicators : (1) Geographical – Desert, Drought, Flood Prone, (2) Occupational Structure – Concentration of Small and Marginal Farmers, Agricultural Labourers, (3) Demographic : Infant Mortality Rate and Distress Migration.

Unit of Identification : (1) District, (2) Village/ Cluster of Villages, (3) Who should do it – State, (4) Which Department – Civil Supplies / Panchayati Raj / Rural Development.

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL HUNGER IDENTIFICATION

Measurable Indicators : (1) Less than two square meals, (2) Less than a specific number of days of employment, (3) Less than a specific level of income.

WHO SHOULD DO IT – PANCHAYAT THROUGH GRAM SABHA

Powers to be Delegated to Panchayats

1. Single window system for programme delivery (PAPs, all PDS related and social security schemes) with panchayats as the unit.
2. Any non-governmental interventions should be brought under the umbrella of panchayat. A partnership development approach is needed for the purpose.
3. Access to financial resources and functionaries
4. Evolving a food package by taking into account the local crop production and food habits and with local procurement arrangements.

MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

13. Interface between NGOs/Activists/ Networks/Lawyers and the Media

A National Consultation was organised on Media for Advocacy and Empowerment of the Rural Poor in which leaders from media – print and electronic - NGOs, Development Thinkers, Activists and representatives from the government participated. This consultation resulted in several suggestions and recommendations. One such important recommendation of the National Consultation was the need to organise an interface between important stakeholders (NGOs, Activists, Lawyers and Lawyer networks) and the Media to evolve strategies to feed the media with information on a continuous campaign mode of advocacy pertaining to issues that impinge on the life of the rural poor.

Accordingly, NIRD organised an Interface Workshop with the participation of 21 activists, media personnel, advocacy groups, lawyers and experienced and sensitive officials on 30 June 2005 to determine a direction for taking up campaigns on rural issues.

I. An overview of issues

1. Issue : It was felt that there is more space in print media, regional and district editions and therefore, development issues also have takers. But the USP of print media i.e. ‘dateline’ stories have given way due to the influence of TV channels.

Recommendations

The News requirements demand more penetration and deeper analysis of issues – new way of writing and selling; more features are need to be written. Training is required for writing stories of value/ importance which is missing.

2. Issue : Has spread of newspapers into rural areas has opened up opportunities and possibilities.

Recommendations

The journalists' way of portrayal of problems lack depth. Publishing mere 'fact' does not interest the poor or marginalised because they are part of them. Reporting positive self-images is very effective. Newspapers should report what impact/changes in life has come and what is giving them the change and empowerment? There are wrong notions among the middle class that the poor and tribals are 'non-preservers' of national resources. The media need to educate the middle class that their interests are best served by aligning and supporting the poor and tribals.

3. *Issue* : Men do not want to come to journalism. Whoever comes, the language skill is appalling and knowledge of India is weak.

Recommendations

The concern is about the aspiring journalists who come with high expectations and lack of inclination/interest and poor knowledge of issues. Probably, this is due to the lack of proper orientation in the courses and training programmes organised for journalists. Features have to be written carefully and effective training may be provided at base level and at mid-career level.

II. Evolving Linkages/Network between Media and Activists

4. *Issue* : The main aim of linkages/network between media and activists is to build mutual awareness and provide exposure to rural issues.

Recommendations

The first task is to build contact with people who write on rural issues. These issues should be built in as part of curriculum in the journalism courses and the students should be encouraged to write on development. In due course such training will help in integrating development issues into mainstream as well as to orient journalists to produce news in a more meaningful way. While NGO-Reporter contact is important it cannot be pushed from bottom development writing should be made attractive to help in career growth.

5. *Issue* : A nursery and incubatory with appropriate institutional arrangement is needed.

Recommendations

The Nehru Yuvak Kendras (NYKs) in the districts should also become part of the Network with proper orientation and training. Media should become a shield/sword for activists and cutting-edge of development and also the whistle blowers. The fellowship and the scholarship may be tuned to the political groundings so that Journalists work on a missionary mode like the way Mr Ali Anwar, a Birla foundation fellow worked for the upliftment of dalit Muslims. Training is needed to change the mind set of journalists/reporters.

Producing simple and small materials for media personnel helps build up awareness and motivate them to seek more details. Persons working in small newspapers at regional/district level can make considerable impact on the community and linkages should be specially forged with writers of such papers. Rural success stories within and outside region have much larger impact.

Networking

6. *Issue* : Social editors' conference may also be organised at regional level on thematic areas to provide clarity of perspectives and also to bring an interface/linkage between press and development agencies. NGOs should be able to handle the information to enable the journalists to appreciate the critical nature of the issue. It was felt that some major newspapers can pioneer and sponsor the social editors' conference at regional level. In this context it was felt that i) Directory of Social Activists; ii) Directory of Development writers (may be PTI can do this) and a manual on Reporting (Ajit Bhattacharya) maybe prepared. NIRD may play the role of coordination in this process.

III. Media Advocacy Support for Campaigns

7. *Issue* : Need to look beyond urban perspective and obtain deeper and better understanding of rural issues.

Recommendations

The North-Eastern Regional Rural Journalists are tided up with regional print media. They are giving the real picture of the stories to the main print media, but are really handicapped with writing skill. So there is a need to improve their capability based on the recent ground reality to shine as young journalists.

A workshop for journalists may be organised for 2-3 days on issues to be taken up for campaign. NIRD, PII, IRMA and such Institutes be associated in organising such workshops. Distinct action plan need to be prepared for different types of orientation for different types and levels of reporters/stringers etc. For instance, an orientation on Right to Information may be designed differently for senior editors, senior journalists and stringers. Similarly, different approaches may be needed for Print, TV and Radio. Same is true for English and Vernacular media. At the State level, the opinion makers are the vernacular media.

8. *Issue* : How can media itself establish linkage with the people since another aspect that needs to be thought of. Thirdly, there are already many in the media are sensitive to development issues and have concern for the poor. If the media does not give adequate space and time what are the alternative means of communication during campaign, when will the effects of 'alternate media' be mainstreamed, what are the situations that will provide such linkages are all issues that need to be taken up.

Recommendations

Effective linkages with the public broadcaster is paramount. Sustained/continuous meeting/contact with media is more important to bring about some media consciousness towards social issues. Activists/Lawyers etc. should keep interacting. Establishing credibility on both sides by evolving some ethics for mutual trust is needed to promote advocacy role. As many fora as possible should be created across the country, at regional and district level for constant interaction between media and activists to gradually strengthen the linkages.

IV. Identification of Issues for Campaign

9. *Issue* : Local issues affecting the immediate population is important in local editions/papers and these are the opinion makers at state/sub-state level. The identification of points and issues will have to be different – it has to be divided into regional and national issues. The identification of issues will also depend on whom we target – (i) sensitise and create a ‘build up’ to influence the decision makers and (ii) broaden the knowledge of readers on various issues.

Recommendations

Translating Acts into action is an important issue. For instance, Right to Information Act may require regional orientation, while ‘Hunger’ can be an issue in specific location. Vested Interests in development, transparency at media, women empowerment etc., may also form part of issues.

10. *Issue : Capacity Building / Training* : Some senior journalists need to be identified who can be motivators for stringers and fresh crop of reporters, as well as receptive bureaucrats who support activists/movements. To begin with, a national core group may be formed to coordinate the campaign on identified issue by choosing a few States for focus by forming State/Regional groups and linking them to existing groups. Some regional workshops may also be organised which can be repeated/replicated at least with half-yearly interval at State/district level.

V. Materials for Campaign

11. *Issue* : To identify an institution/organisation to act as a resource organisation for each of the campaign issues.

Recommendations

Alternatively, a core group should be formed to work on identified issues and bring out needed materials. This can be funded partly by some newspapers and partly by government. Such a core group can become a ‘clearing house’ of information. The materials

may have ‘feeding’ and ‘orientation’ elements. Again materials may be different for different stakeholders e.g. journalists and campaigners.

General Recommendations

1. For meaningful activity on important rural issues, a lively partnership between sensitive media on the one hand and activists groups with grassroots operations on the other is essential. Where this can be backed up with support from legal activists, there will be additional value. There are several parts of countries where such a partnership can immediately be forged.
2. While the coordinating organisations would arrange meetings, from time to time to focus on concerns and issues of importance in the area, CHARKHA at Delhi would act as a nodal organisation for updating the efforts being made and also for sharing information. This will also facilitate the identification of issues which need to be taken from at the local level, to the regional and national levels.
3. CHARKHA need to function as a clearing house of information on issues and developments in the sector and act as a nodal point in this exercise. NIRD would provide some initial support to CHARKHA for its coordination and clearing house role.
4. All the partners of the Interface may explore donors or government support, MoRD, MHRD, I & B, PB, UNDP, UNESCO etc. may be approached for funding.
5. There is a need for training and the upgradation of skills of rural correspondents. It was felt that activists who are aware of issues and can also write, need to be also given an orientation.
6. At the National Consultation held in February, it was recommended that the Fellowships of the Ministry of Rural Development should be decentralised and also extended to cover the award of stipends to stringers/rural correspondents and activists. It was felt that the coordinating organisations identified now may play a nodal role in such a decentralised arrangement

and this may be taken up with the Ministry of Rural Development.

7. The possibility of setting up training institutions and in at least a few regions would also be examined. This could be in partnership between the media and the funding by raising contributions and seeking support from funding agencies and Government.
8. Training/orientation workshops on sensitisation/packaging/writing stories should be organised at regional levels for which sponsorship should be explored from some media houses.
9. Series of Editors' Meet on social issues, for regional newspapers may be organised.
10. Feature services: UNI can organise some small group meeting to develop good materials/stories.
11. In order to operationalise the idea of attachment of journalists as well as to organise exposure visits we must look for ways and means of raising funds.

14. Right to Information and Rural Development Programmes

Introduction

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Right to Information Act (RTIA) together hold a promise of transparency and accountability in providing livelihood to rural poor. However, their benefits can be realised only if the people are well informed and communities are empowered. This can be achieved through a close coordination between the government, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives on one hand and the citizens' group, activists and media on the other. With this objective, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad held interactions between these stakeholders in the last few months specifically focusing on media advocacy and the right to information and came out with a set of recommendations and follow up actions. One of the recommendations was to organise multi-stakeholder meetings to build regional networks and provide forums for stakeholders to meet, interact and take up issues concerning rural poor.

Recommendations

1. The RTI Manuals must demystify RTI, and make these manuals available in regional language and simple enough to be deciphered by rural citizens; the participants will send their comments on NIRD manual by mail.
2. State laws should be suitably amended to provide a single window system to eliminate the multiplicity of PIOs and rationalise administrative structures and systems.
3. State governments should simplify the complex procedures for obtaining information.
4. State laws must make provisions to ensure that the information seeker is given the necessary information on the specified date or send information by post as villagers can not undertake journeys from far away villages to district or taluka places to collect information.

5. Develop an interface with Unions of Journalists of each State to access a wider cross-section of journalists.
6. Develop concrete media interventions in collaboration with the Journalist's Union to enhance the social sensitivity of press.
7. Network member will organise collaborative workshops of journalists and activists and NGOs in their respective locations on the finer nuances of RTI and NREGA.
8. MKSS and Vivida Features will carry forward the process of formalising and activating the network in the region. SIRD, Jaipur will provide venue for all the discussions of the network and also play the role of nodal member in the network and capacity building.
9. Identify state wise volunteer coordinators, who will proactively take responsibility to establish linkages with other journalists and conduct collaborative workshops.
10. Building networks of sensitised journalists across the State and the country and provide them with information so to give publicity to grassroots initiatives in implementation of NREGA and RTI. Nikhil Dey of MKSS gave presentation of RTI : Draft Social Audit Manuals for RD Scheme.

The open house discussion for suggestions for manuals and guidelines was facilitated by Sandeep Pandey and many valuable inputs were added by the participants narrating their experiences. Lal Singh from Rajasthan suggested that people should get the information 15 days before the social audit. He narrated a case wherein a 30 year old building was shown on the record as a 5 year old construction. Again, Panchayat claimed that they undertook its construction, irrigation department said they did it and funnily, the person undertaking the construction was the same for all the claimants. Narayan Singh who adhered to the MKSS norm of contesting the Panchayat election in Rs. 1200 (or less) said that these elections need Rs. 1-2 lak and hence the Sarpanch has to become corrupt to recover this amount. As MKSS Sarpanch, he facilitated awareness programmes for Sarpanches about non-corrupt practices. Ramkaran of Tilonia informed that they started

social audit activities since 1997 and considers it a very important as people who toil for their villages have right to know about their Panchayat's finances. Ramzan Ahmed of Badesar village said that 200 labourers were being paid only Rs. 50 and they had a fight for their right to minimum wages till they got Rs. 73 ultimately. One of the participant from UP informed that they undertake Janata Janch (People's Investigation) which is also a good form of social audit.

Agenda for Action

This session facilitated by Mr. Lalit Mathur had renowned media persons, activists and officials reflecting their view on information dissemination, capacity building and training. C.K. Naidu, resident editor, Hindustan Times, Jaipur said that the people need to be informed that RTI tool should not be misused towards political gains. Pamela Philipose, associate editor, Indian Express observed that the mainstream media so far supported RTI and NREGA issues but the test lies in their coverage during the implementation phase. We are living in times of increasing disparity between urban and rural areas which needs to be looked at too. Kavita of Khabar Laheriya said that children carry the message home very effectively and hence the school syllabus should include issues of rural development in which NIRD could take a lead. Mamta Jetley of Vividha Features said that there should be a media watch group to monitor the media coverage of the RTI and NREGA issues. Talking about networking media, activists/social workers, NGOs, PRIs, government officials, she said that each homogenous group should also meet time to time on issues. Sunny Sebastian, journalist from Jaipur said that the good news is that the bureaucracy in Rajasthan, which acted very difficult, has now come around and a mere mention of RTI changes their attitude. He questioned why only right to information and why not duty to inform, for example the authority should inform the decision to cut trees in advance or tell Ken-Betwa project encourages economic offenses and crime on one hand and emphasises religious stereotypes on the other. Hence there is a need to create an atmosphere that will guide the media. Sheilendra Singh of Rajasthan Patrika said that his paper take up the social responsibility in carrying developmental issues well.

15. Western Regional Media Meet of Media, Activists/NGOs/PRI and Government Officials on Transparent and Accountable Implementaton of Rural Development Specially Focussing on NREGS and RTI

Introduction

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Right to Information Act (RTIA) together hold a promise of transparency and accountability in providing livelihood to rural poor. However, their benefits can be realised only if the people are well informed and communities are empowered. This can be achieved through a close coordination between the government, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and elected representatives on one hand and the citizens' group, activists and media on the other. With this objective, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad held interactions between these stakeholders in the last few months specifically focusing on media advocacy and the right to information and came out with a set of recommendations and follow-up actions. One of the recommendations was to organise multi-stakeholders meetings to build regional networks and provide forums for stakeholders to meet, interact and take up issues concerning rural poor.

The second Regional Meet covering Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Goa was held at YASHADA on the 23rd January, 2006 in collaboration with National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS) and Unique Features. Over 70 delegates from Media, NGO/Activists, PRIs and Rural Development Department participated in this Regional Meet.

Objectives

- a) To share the experiences across the States in respect of NREGS and RTI Act.
- b) To impress upon the coordinated role of Media, NGOs/Activists, PRIs and government functionaries for the successful

implementation of Rural Development Programmes with special focus on NREGS and RTI.

- c) To form a network across the States and chalk out an action plan to build awareness, disseminate information and be a facilitating watch dog for proper implementation of rural development programmes meant for the rural poor.
- d) To discuss the Manuals on Rural Development Programmes, and RTI with a special focus on suo motto disclosures of information and NREGS and Social Audit.

In the Open House debate, participants shared their experiences and views about the implementation of these programmes. Following are the essence of the discussion.

- * Formulation of schemes under NREGA is very important and should clearly specify the target group, implementation procedure, provisions and rules. The schemes formulated should be shared among the wider public so that changes and suggestions as well as needs representing various sections of people get incorporated before implementation of the scheme.
- * IEC is very important in NREGA which will come into force from February 2, 2006. Discussions on the scheme should be held in the gram sabha. Campaign should also be taken up through wall writing, radio broadcasting, posters and other forms of media spreading the message of NREGS. In this respect, it was felt that the NGOs and the activists should organise rallies for the dissemination of the information of the Act and also to organise an 'Application Campaign Week'. The media need to carry message of the 'entitlement' of the people under the scheme. The women in media network which has national and local level units may also be a part of the campaign.
- * There are reservations on the objectives of NREGS. It is important that the mind-set of top level executives and functionaries need to be changed to enable the public institutions to take up this challenge to provide support. Such sensitisation

should also include issues like self disclosure through 'suo-motto' information. In this context, it was explained that NIRD is aware of the importance of sensitising various stakeholders. For this purpose five TOTs are being organised to create a cadre of 145 master trainers who in turn will train a larger cadre of trainers at State and district level. The proposed training of NREGS cover officials at different levels, President and Secretary of gram panchayats and officials of line departments.

- * The Hindi version of the Act is not yet available for wider circulation. Some of them said that instead of waiting for people to register under NREGS, all BPL families may be issued with job cards. The guidelines on procedures of NREGS should also include information on how scheme can be dovetailed with other programmes like Minimum Wages Act, RTI, etc., and also method of correlation of wages with quantum of work done. The works identified under NREGS may include such works which facilitate schemes like mid-day meal programme.
- * It is very important that the monitoring and corrective action on the implementation of the scheme are given adequate importance. Jansunwai and social audit should be a part of the scheme. In fact, a Jansunawai Van may be established in each of the district where the scheme is being implemented.

RTI : Nature and Issues

- * There is a need to further spread the right to information activities in Maharashtra and the response as of now is encouraging as could be seen from the 51000 applications reaching up to 15th November. YASHADA is the National Resource Centre for right to information training, covering 12 States. The clientele include not just the government officials but also NGOs, and media persons to help spread the message to village level.
- * Suo motto disclosure at village level is important. Dissemination of the provision of these Acts - through radio, TV are all possible.

Radio as a medium is playing its role in dissemination. There is a good response for radio programme.

- * The notice board at gram panchayat may give details of the applicants as self disclosure. Gram panchayat should take up social audit - All relevant documents are to be made available at the gram panchayat level.
- * Records are useful for research which should not be kept in dark. By keeping them in the public domain i.e., proactive disclosure we can reduce the number of applications.

RTI and Social Audit

- * The features of the NREGA - Social Audit manual sponsored by NIRD highlights the following :
- * Job card - delay in receiving, issuance to false to ineligible persons, asking for money to get these cards are some things that can go wrong with the scheme. A time period (limit) of only one month should be allowed to issue these cards.
- * Apply for work : Things may go wrong. People be allowed to send it by post too. Immediate written reply be sent by concerned authorities. Interactions on periodical basis, may be weekly, for sharing of information and grievances will be useful.
- * Social audit through Gram Sabha - Public hearings like mass meetings, should be held once in six months for all the works taken up in the villages. Observers may be present in all these sabhas as a deterrent for those who may try to scuttle the proceedings.

NREGS : Capacity Building and Action Plan

NIRD has developed a set of modules, through a wide consultation process, for NREGS and formulated a National Training Action Plan. A cascade model of training plan has been evolved and it was decided to begin training from February 2006 at NIRD.

The modules emphasises on the level - like at gram panchayat, panchayat officials and implementers at district. A perspective plan need to be developed. Field visit is also a part of the training programme. Participants of these programme are supposed to train functionaries and also propagate the provisions of the scheme to people.

Open House Discussion

Concerns have also been expressed that people have resigned to corruption and they have no courage to talk about it because they fear that they may lose whatever they are getting now. People do not know about right to information. Suo motto disclosure are important, because getting copies of information required money and many people may not be able to or willing to spend. On the other hand, most of the public offices have not appointed public information officers and also their name not displayed.

The application process of employment guarantee scheme is daunting. The punishment for erring functionaries is not clear for any offences. Government has to do the monitoring rigorously. Violating the suo motto disclosure clause has no penalty. Even in Rajasthan where RTI movement is active, records have not been made available when a social audit is taken up and people are afraid or hushed up from speaking by powerful political leaders during the social audit.

Networking of Media - NGOs - Activists - PRI Govt.

This session has devoted its time to evolve methodology, mechanism to work together, draw strength, learn from each other, to activate to get synergy and strength for spreading the message of NREGS and RTI. The need for networking of stakeholders has been unanimously agreed to jointly move towards making right to information and employment guarantee scheme work.

It was suggested that each State may prepare an action plan for next few months to take up these two laws to the ground level. The challenge now is to increase the scope of this network to reach out to the unreached.

YASHADA has offered to take up capacity building programmes and ToTs as a main partner of the Western Regional Network. Working with only government officials is not enough and reaching out to large sections of people is needed. All other SIRDs and ETCs have also offered to lend full support in this endeavour.

Maharashtra employment guarantee scheme is going on for the last 30 years. The scams have been always talked about for ages by the Press and many organisations. Many people's movements have worked on this for many years. The emancipatory potential of NREGs should not be overlooked and it should be linked with larger agenda of change. It is not enough to have internet alone and role of local Vernacular Press is equally important. They are active in their own way. But how do we connect with them is an important issue.

Community radio can be taken as an option. Literacy is a hurdle for the general public to share, but voice can be uploaded for the needy to participate. TV and print are not poor people's media. The organisers of the Meet have reassured that community radio is also on the agenda. Action points can be thought of together. Rural development news is not covered in Press. Journalists are not trained. Workshops should be organised for grassroot people and regional journalists to bring them together to understand the NREGS and RTI from the activists' point of view.

NREGS has promised that huge amount of money will be invested in rural areas and lakhs of people will be trained too. Information disclosure through network is needed to achieve the purpose of these Acts. Networks give security too. Knowledge networking is a very important tool of empowerment. Success stories need to be given prominence and to be carried forward so that we do not get cynic.

Some have cautioned that media is getting overly emphasised. Many things are happening before and after what gets conveyed in the media. Therefore more NGOs and representatives from people's movements should be brought into the network.

Recommendations

1. The manuals on RTI and social audit are welcome but unless awareness is built, people may not really use them. The proposed networks should play a very important role in this respect. The scope of manual should be enlarged to cover schemes like mid day meal/PDs.
2. Media should focus not only on exposing corruption - misappropriation but successful initiatives should be written to build hopes and not despair.
3. State and sub State level workshops are very much necessary to create awareness and provide orientation to the stakeholders/ partners' themselves.
4. Clear and simple IEC materials are urgently needed for wider and quicker dissemination. In addition to IEC for grassroots, simultaneous sensitisation of senior officials is also necessary.
5. The modules developed by NIRD for NREGS and Social Audit would require to consider some special pedagogy. With a view to introduce effective pedagogy, NIRD may organise consultation on these modules/manuals with activists and field level organisation before finalising the modules.
6. Monitoring the activities under NREGS and RTI at grassroots level would be useful. Some single formats can be evolved and made available to smaller NGOs.
7. Networking for EGS and RTI should be well focused and should not be confined to elite urban and efforts must be made to bring grassroots and rural players.
8. Existing networks of NGO, Media, Activists should come together to form a larger network towards achieving larger goal of poverty reduction focusing on EGS and RTI.
9. These networks should carry forward the message and spirit of RTI and EGS through local workshop and train particularly those journalists working on such issues in local edition of paper.

10. SIRDs should become nodal/converging points for such network and provide venue for organising network meets and training programmes and workshops as well. SIRDs should also design and offer training programme on these issues for the network clientele.
11. The network partners should mobilise resources locally to organise the awareness building and take up causes of the rural poor. Partial support can be found from government agencies and NIRD.
12. To begin with we may start a e-mail forum and this forum should provide information to support the smaller players in the newspapers.
13. Stringers are part time journalists and part time social activists who have a standing in the local community. Efforts to orient and sensitise them may produce good results. This group should be included in the training and capacity building initiatives.
14. One probable and immediate action that could be taken up by the participants through their network is to organise "application filing rally" under RTI and publicise the same through media.
15. The participating NGO/Activists Media personnel should discuss the recommendations of this meet with their fraternity to evolve some of the follow-up actions and also formulate a long term action plan.
16. Community radio could be an effective medium for disseminating news and awareness building in remote and unconnected tribal areas.
17. Field Publicity Unit of State Department should evolve suitable skits on EGS and RTIs.
18. A special newsletter on RTI/EGS may also be thought of.
19. Roles and Responsibilities of the network partners.

- a) The State Coordinators and other network partners should have clear agenda, a time-bound plan of action and give commitments to that effect.
- b) Each State should have a State Coordinator who will (i) work towards networking all stakeholders and organise rural journalists/stringers/activists' workshops to enhance their knowledge base in Rural Development especially RTI/NREGS.
- c) NGOs/CBOs who are members of the network should actively take NREGS to the grassroot level through various communication methods, training programmes in collaboration with SIRDs/ETCs and provide news/information to the media.
- d) Identify preferably freelance mid-career journalists who will give weekly round up of regional language media for circulating on national network for members from other States to pick up threads, information for their work (writing, campaign, solidarity etc.).
- e) Bring together Media and NGO/activists to learn from each other and highlight the issues concerning rural poor.
- f) Work with local agencies like DRDA/ZP and other networks, international agencies and raise funds for the networks activities.
- g) Monitor regional media - pre-intervention and post intervention - in reference to writing of journalists participating in our programmes to assess the impact.

AGRICULTURE : RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE

16. Farmer's Suicide: Dynamics and Strategies of Prevention

Objectives

The workshop was organised during November 28-29, 2005 with the following objectives.

1. To understand causes and consequences of suicide
2. To discuss the role of farmers movement and other community based organisation in handling the issue of suicide.
3. To acquaint and formulate with various strategies to prevent suicide.

Altogether 24 participants, mostly academicians, few government officials, farmer associations, few NGOs and research organisations and others attended the workshop.

The focus was on understanding the processes and situations leading or contributing to a suicidal state and its consequent influence on the decision making process is a key to understand suicide. Suicide is a complex problem for which there is no simple cause, no single reason. It results from a complex interaction of psychological, social, cultural, financial and environmental factors.

The two major issues of the workshop namely cause and consequences of suicide and preventive role and strategies to overcome suicide were discussed. Scholars presented various papers from different parts of the country related to these issues.

Issue I : Causes and Consequences of Suicide

Observations

- * The most affected community are marginal farmers and small farmers due to high debt for digging bore wells.

- * The negligence on the part of government to maintain the available water tanks to facilitate the minor irrigation especially in Andhra Pradesh.
- * Lot of investment for cotton crop resulted in farmers becoming more distressed.
- * Inadequate staff right to meet the demand of farmers from the village level to district level particularly in expansion and agriculture extension.
- * People who could be employed or employable in the villages are supposed to live in the villages and not available to the village community due to heavy migration in urban areas.
- * Negative growth rate in agricultural and allied sector activities.
- * Increase of non-farm employment and shrunken land holding size of farmers.
- * Breakdown of caste hierarchy and family structure and increase of fashion in identification of caste.
- * Shrinkage and breakdown of social relationship in the village community.
- * High aspiration and lack of coping strategies resulted in committing suicide.
- * Apart from the counseling and help line facility there is an urgent need for establishing of social trauma centres starting from the village level.
- * Asymmetrical power supply in villages has led to loss of crops.
- * Impact of globalisation and liberalisation on farmer community should be safeguarded.
- * Ensuring quality of seeds by proper authority.

Recommendations

- * Import of agricultural products under the WTO agreement to be examined.
- * Domestic market should be protected totally from large scale outside imports.
- * Expansion of crop insurance scheme with remunerative price support from government has to be established for all crops.
- * Adequate price stabilisation scheme should be introduced.
- * Micro finance facility with minimum interest or subsidy-linked provision should be made available to the village community.
- * Regulation of prices of fertilisers by withdrawing decol policy.
- * Rehabilitation work of suicide victim families to be transferred to development department from Revenue Department.

Causes

1. *Distressed Conditions Related to Drought and Failure of Rainfall* : Drought and failure of rainfall are the main causes for the suicides of farmers. They strive hard, during the cropping seasons to get good yields but they are disappointed but due to lack of rainfall which results in famine ultimately resulting in committing suicide.
2. *Adoption of New Technology with Inadequate Knowledge and Expertise* : The farmers are eager to buy the new technology to improve their cropping needs "But due to inadequate knowledge and expertise, it is not used properly and he/she fails to get the necessary output based on the technology used". Literacy can help the farmers in this regard. But high market values of latest technology has led to debts for buying it. The increase in debts has also been cause the farmers to commit suicide.

3. *Sudden Attack of Pests and Diseases* : Sudden attack of pests and diseases is one of the main cause for committing suicides. Due to the sudden attack, the farmers use pesticides and insecticides sold under the fake names, and which are available for low costs which farmers are tempted to purchase it.
4. Market prices crash due to bulk arrivals in the market or other extreme factors.
5. Non availability of proper marketing infrastructure and imperfections in the existing markets.
6. Mounting credit burden, debt trap and consequent non-financial non-viability.
7. Interlocked input-credit product markets.
8. Failure of extension services to advice at the proper time about farm operations.
9. Counseling failure by the institutions and breaking off traditional village institutions.

Reasons for Suicides

By and large the present study has identified the following reasons for farmers' distress and the resultant phenomenon of their suicides and these are classified into 3 categories as shown below:

AGRO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Chronic drought and scanty rainfall, lack of underground water, high cost of cultivation with inadequate returns, crop failures and low yields, lack of remunerative prices for the farm produce, spurious fertilisers, pesticides and seeds, lack of sufficient institutional credit flows, high rates of rent charged by landowners and high interest rates charged by private moneylenders, failure of agricultural related cooperative banks in lending money to farmers, lack of sustainable irrigation facilities, failure in their attempts to generate water through wells and borewells, inadequate and unorganised agricultural market facilities for farmers etc.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Domestic problems as reflected in high domestic expenditure in the areas of health, education, family rituals and ceremonies and family maintenance; lack of understanding, cooperation and interaction between the conjugal pair, suspicious character of the wives; and lack of money to pay the school / college fee and lack of resources to pay the promised dowry etc.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

The critical and psychological factors that abetted and aggravated the situation where the victims were motivated enough to take recourse to suicide are:

Loss of self-esteem, ego and pride, feeling of shame and insult, feeling hurt, depression and alcoholism, suffering from alienation characterised by helplessness, isolation, meaninglessness, powerlessness and self-estrangement, the inability to attain high standards or expectations developed the feelings of frustration, failure and worthlessness. When progress toward goals is blocked, they became vulnerable to suicide, pessimism about the future and a conviction that nothing can be done to improve one's life situation perhaps might have predisposed them to suicide.

Issue 2 : Preventive Role and Strategies to Overcome Suicide

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

In the *second* set of measures the government should extend immediate financial assistance to the bereaved families for the repayment of loans and meeting other expenses and establish help-lines through village *panchayats* to avert the deaths of farmers who are on the brink of committing suicide. It is also essential to provide free education to children from deceased families parents encouraging child labour. Besides, media, NGOs and others should help the farmers by instilling confidence and explaining the success stories of farmers who could cope well with similar situations in spite of persisting loan and debt problems.

CROP PRODUCTIVITY

For mitigating the farmers' distress in Andhra Pradesh, policy initiatives are to be taken up for increasing the crop productivity, regulating the cropping pattern to suit to the existing resources of the farmers, reducing the cost of production, providing remunerative prices for the product, removing market imperfections, creating opportunities for non-farm employment strengthening social institutions which create confidence for meeting the challenges and providing counseling to the depressed farmers. Following are the specific initiatives required.

- i) Creation of additional irrigation facilities, especially in the resource poor areas to the resource poor farmers, through the development of surface irrigation (canal and tank irrigation) and taking up watershed development programmes. At the same time, a proper regulatory mechanism is to be developed to exploit the groundwater in a sustainable manner.
- ii) Due to recurring droughts in the State, especially in the recent period, effective steps should be taken to control deforestation and help in increasing forest cover to improve the rainfall and reduce soil erosion.
- iii) There is a need for regulating cropping pattern to suit to the resources and risk bearing capacity of poor farmers. In the water scarce areas, it is always good for the resource poor farmers to go for less water intensive and more drought resistant coarse cereal crops leaving the high risky commercial crops to provide food security and to reduce the market dependence. In this connection, agricultural extension services should be promoted which is non-existent in the State today.
- iv) Provision of timely and adequate chapter credit through institutional sources to all resource poor farmers including tenant cultivators and regulating the activities of private moneylenders. The practice of input-credit tie-up should be discouraged.

- v) Removing the prevailing market imperfections in the input and product market.
 - (a) The seed market is dominated by the private agencies that supply low quality seed. The unscrupulous activities of the private traders in the seed market need to be regulated.
 - (b) In the case of pesticides the farmers are misled by the traders and indiscriminate use of pesticide and high cost pesticides turns to be spurious ones. The farmers are to be educated on IPM and IDM methods through extension services and other media. Also, the unscrupulous activities of the traders in pesticide market need to be regulated.
 - (c) Irregularities in the regulated markets must be removed.
- vi) All the above said initiatives would contribute for increasing the crop productivity and net income from crop production. But it is not sufficient to solve the problem of farmer's distress in the State due to smaller size of land holdings.
- vii) In order to tackle the social aspects the government should take steps to provide counseling services.
 - a) As dowry system is causing great distress, social awareness should be promoted against the evils of dowry system with the help of NGOs.
 - b) The farmers must be counseled against alcoholism.
 - c) As changing times are leading towards more nuclear families, the village community should play an important role in identifying the farmers in distress and recommending them for counseling.
 1. Need to look into the terms of trade which is always in favour of agriculture rather than industrial sectors.
 2. Declaring agriculture as an industry when the agrarian sector is in crisis the state can come out with series of concessions to protect it from the total collapse.

3. Extending social security measures to the farming community, irrespective of class category.
4. Writing off loans and declaring agriculture sector as debt free sector.
5. Subsidies should be given directly to farming community and to the companies such as seed, fertilisers etc.
6. Legalising the leasing in or sharecropping at the countryside.
7. Fragmentation of land should stop thereby restructuring the land to make it more economical.
8. Distribution system should be made more effective and judicious- such as water, seeds etc.

Recommendations

- * Cooperative formation to empower farmers.
- * Insurance for crop.
- * Responsible transfer of training by its regulation.
- * Better connectivity and transport.
- * Marketing intelligence and assistance.
- * Value addition at production centres specially to perishable commodities.
- * Crop and avocation diversification.
- * Improvement in irrigation (tank repairs).
- * Consolidation of land and prevention of fragmentation to retain viable farm sizes.
- * Land use planning and its implementation.
- * Extension agencies under one umbrella.

- * Set up trauma centre/counseling centres.
- * Regulate health and education costs.
- * Regulate cropping pattern.
- * Create non and farm employment.
- * Use of information and communication technology.
- * Social trauma centres have to be set up in the villages for counseling.

Suicide has a cumulative causation. It occurs due to various reasons and sometimes the circumstantial evidence leads to derive at such a conclusion but more often drawing such inferences may be wrong. As the investigation is focused more on farmer's suicides naturally the fulcrum of the analysis is farm-centered activities. But at the same time other qualitative factors imparting suicides need to be understood properly.

Education campaigns might help young men more in particular, to seek assistance rather than suffer in silence. Billions of dollars are spent on development, in areas like health, education, and environment and for women's empowerment, but until recently there was not even one counseling agency for depressed people.

Depression is treatable, and suicide is avoidable. Committing suicide sets a bad example for others which makes other to repeat the crime.

17. Rural-Urban Divide During the 90s

Introduction

The share of rural areas in the national income is declining at a faster pace than its share in population. The 1990s experienced acceleration in widening of the rural-urban per capita income gap. Deceleration of rural income growth rates during the 1990s, combined with the acceleration of urban income growth rates may foreshadow a further deepening of the rural-urban divide. At the start of the 1970s, 62 per cent of India's national income was generated in rural areas, and only 38 per cent from urban locations. Today, the urban population earns a little more than half of the national income. Thus, in terms of income generation, the centre of gravity in the Indian economy has shifted from rural to urban areas. The vast majority of income earners, however, continue to live and work in rural areas. A change in the income growth trajectories of rural and urban areas led to this deepening of the rural-urban divide. The relatively rapid growth rates of urban income accelerated continuously during 1991-92 – 2001-02. The relatively slow growth rates of rural income decelerated marginally during the 1990s. In short, the gaps between rural and urban growth rates have widened over time, most noticeably during the most recent period. This does not augur well for the future economic welfare of rural India's population.

Objectives

- * To discuss the various socio-economic and other causative factors resulting in rural-urban divide in India;
- * To analyse the impact of economic reform policies and programmes during the 90s and its impact on rural-urban divide; and
- * To identify the factors contributing to disparities and suggest ways and means to minimise rural-urban divide.

Recommendation

1. Issue : High Level Dropout Rate in Primary Education in Rural Areas.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The provision of mid day meal programme for children still hold promise so that benefits reach the needy persons.
2. It is obvious that the dropout rate at primary level is much more due to the poverty. Reduction in poverty is an effective measure to reduce the dropout rate.
3. Excessive rush in higher education should be stopped and education at secondary and higher secondary level should be made employment oriented through imparting technical education and skills relating to farming and crafts.
4. Vocational education should be made compulsory at the primary, secondary and higher secondary level.
5. Primary and secondary education should be extended to each Panchayat.

2. Issue : Lack of Educational Infrastructure in Rural Areas

RECOMMENDATION

1. The special emphasis on creation of educational infrastructure in schools in rural areas is needed at the district level with the regular monitoring by the officials.
2. Local NGOs as well as philanthropologists should be encouraged to extend support in maintenance of the infrastructure by the district administration.

3. Issue : Inadequate Number of Teachers and Job Insecurity

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is seen that the states like Bihar do not have teachers (somewhere 1 into 90) according to the strength of the students

in the schools. This has created apathy among the rural parents. Immediate adequate number of teacher's deployment with job security is needed to reverse the social syndrome of high dropouts rate.

4. *Issue* : Caste Prejudice in the Delivery of Social Services

RECOMMENDATION

To break the localised caste syndrome in delivery of social services, it is desired that the people themselves are encouraged to participate in delivery system and the implementing agencies should guide them properly. Further, the government officials should be made responsible and the lapses if emerge the immediate charges be fixed and penalised. This will make delivery system accessible.

5. *Issue* : Lack of Toilet and Proper Sanitation in Rural Schools

RECOMMENDATION

Community efforts should be encouraged to construct toilet and sanitation facilities in the schools and the Panchayats should support in maintaining them. The local village should develop the habit of formation of cooperation for care and maintenance of the schools and the social services delivery system.

6. *Issue* : Neglect in Funds Availability to Rural Remote Schools

RECOMMENDATION

Six per cent of GDP is warranted on education to correct most of the shortcomings faced in the wake of imparting education atleast at primary level.

7. *Issue* : Rise in Occupational Disparity

RECOMMENDATION

1. The animal husbandry and dairy activities which had received a tremendous boost during the 1970's and 80's due to its viability and manageability by the rural households came under stress in

the 90's owing to rising input costs in the form of feeds. This needs immediate care and due provisions be made to provide safeguards to stakeholders in the dairy industry.

2. Farm based mechanisation came in a large manner in the 90's owing to the economic reforms and open market economy, and this activity received extensive support from the industry, banks and other institutions. Their efforts cost a lot of job opportunities for the rural poor in the farm sector coupled with increasing input costs. The necessity for "efficiency" and other "cost reduction measures" are urgently needed to protect the interest of small and marginal farmers.
3. During the ensuing period (1991-2001), the prices of grains have grown only by 5 per cent while those of inputs like fuel price rose up by 30 per cent, fertiliser by 13 per cent, cement 20 per cent. This caused a lot of stress on rural poor thereby losing their income. The trend can be changed by giving price incentives to some agro-products. This calls for an appropriate and sustained investment, capacity building as well as market development over the next two~three decades for sustained growth and employment in this sector.
4. In addition, the following measures are of prime importance: Information base (one of the objectives being to reduce, if not eliminate, the menace of the middle men in the whole process, diversification in the farm sector; enhancing the irrigation potential (learning from the Israel experience, etc).
5. The acceleration in urban sector has been more by default than by design. What is essentially required is that we need to have a vision spread over atleast 50 years with concrete plans for the next at least 10~20 years keeping in view the rural demand of the services as well as of augmenting mechanism for gainful employment.

8. *Issue* : Decline in Public Investment in Agriculture

RECOMMENDATION

1. Public investment in agriculture has been declining which needs to be checked immediately. In a State like Bihar and Assam the State's economy is entirely dependent on agriculture which requires urgent attention for more investment in irrigation infrastructure; This will help in bridging the widening gaps of rural-urban in the States.
2. Credit flows to the small and marginal farmers should be increased and made easily accessible during slack season.
3. Delivery system of credit needs to be overhauled as it is in a moribund State.

9. *Issue* : Ineffectiveness of Programmes of Poverty Reduction in Empowerment of Rural Poor.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Empowerment of rural people is necessary.
2. Transparency and accountability in programme implementation and dissemination of information will help in reduction of poverty in rural areas.
3. An integrated approach is needed for education, income generation and population control for the empowerment of rural people.
4. The communication system from top to bottom and vice versa should be rejuvenated.

10. *Issue* : Rising Trends in Rural Population

RECOMMENDATION

1. Government should pay attention to family planning. The girl child must receive incentives, as bias against girl child is a major factor for increasing the family size and high dropouts in primary education.

2. Regular health awareness camps should be conducted in rural areas.
3. Government should pay attention for enhancing the quality of drugs and basic facilities at the health centres.
4. Government should be attentive to protect the environmental degradation, a major cause of poor health and bad sanitation, both in rural and urban areas.
5. Investment in primary health services should be enhanced and it should be 2 per cent of SDP with an emphasis on rural area health development schemes.

11. Issue : Deteriorating Quality of Life in Rural Areas.

RECOMMENDATION

1. There should be proper guidelines for using groundwater through borewells as more than 90 per cent of the rural water supply schemes are depending on groundwater.
2. There should be improvement in public water supply system, to enable the poor people to have access to safe water with less cost.
3. Since power shortage is the major drawback in rural areas and also to have access for piped water services, there should be proper coordination between departments concerned to ensure water supply regular.
4. Hospital / primary health facilities should be equipped with basic and modern facilities so that rural people do not go to urban areas for their treatment which is costly.
5. Awareness programmes for inculcating the habit of clean life should be promoted through NGOs, government organisations and National Service Scheme (NSS) in rural areas.
6. Apart from this Government should entrust the panchayat level authority to maintain cleanliness in the villages by providing proper drainage system, cleaning the ponds, proper toilet facilities etc.

18. National Workshop on WTO and Agrarian Issues

Ever since the introduction of agriculture as subject of international trade agreement in the Uruguay round of General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs in 1987, the pressure and initiative of the developed countries has remained a difficult area of multilateral decision making. The process is still on to create a consensus on Doha Declaration on Agriculture (DDA), though some moderate success has been achieved during the Hong Kong Meet recently. The three pillars of Agreements on Agriculture (AoA), i.e., increasing market access, reducing domestic support (especially the subsidies on farm inputs) and curtailing export promotion measures (like export subsidies) under the WTO framework of negotiations, are slowly progressing, yet some of the issues like self sufficiency, food security and poverty reduction through agricultural development have by and large been neglected.

The dichotomy becomes more acute when the issue of agriculture is viewed with a perspective of employment generation and poverty reduction, which requires government support as also direct intervention calling for asset redistribution, land reforms and extending protection to the farmers and agricultural labourers. Keeping these in view, the focus of the seminar was to discuss -

1. WTO negotiations on agriculture and their implications for India;
2. Analyse the trends in agrarian relations, policy issues and options to reorganise the small and marginal farmers to enhance their productivity, competitiveness and market share; and
3. Issues of sustainability, food security, diversification and poverty.

Recommendations

- A. DOMESTIC SUPPORT, MARKET ACCESS AND TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE

Main issues

- i) The subsidies provided by the developed countries have not come down. In fact, they have gone up. When this is the case, how can trade be fair for it is due to these subsidies, comparative cost advantages exist. Once, these subsidies are removed, comparative cost advantage ceases to exist.
- ii) Europe is the largest provider of subsidy. In fact, European Union provides 90 per cent of the subsidies in the World. This also means that productivity has no role in determining the exports of the country.
- iii) Domestic policy is the main factor causing problems to the agricultural sector. There is no synergy between the policy of the Centre and those followed by the States. The grassroots people are not aware of WTO and its implications.
- iv) Within the given framework aggregate measure of subsidies (AMSs) subsidies can go up to ten per cent. In India it is not only below this level but has also come down further. The question therefore is who stopped subsidies? The Central and State Governments are not concerned about the welfare of the agriculture sector. Hence, the AMS has come down. The decline in subsidy is due to the conditional finance by World Bank.

Recommendations

- a) There is a need for a Comprehensive policy at the centre, which is linked with the policies of the States. The policy should be peasant friendly – not only with respect to output markets but also input markets. Pressure groups of intellectuals should pressurise the Government to come out with such a policy.
- b) Whether WTO or no WTO, agriculture is a losing proposition. There is need for budgetary surplus to support agriculture. The surplus of the services sector should be utilised to support the agriculture sector. One per cent of the National Income i.e., four

per cent of the Agricultural Income should be used for generating employment opportunities for marginal and small farmers. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is an important and significant effort in this direction.

B. TRIPS

Issues

- * Biotechnology related patents were not much discussed so far in any meeting of WTO deliberations.
- * Low level of literacy regarding the TRIPS with in the educated class as well as with the policy observers.
- * Patent rights were allowed for 20 years period with the impression that no much technological changes in the processes or products will emerge.
- * Is it necessary to include the plants, crop varieties, seeds etc., under TRIPS?
- * The section 99 to 103 allows some special provision to relax the patent by the government for the welfare of the society (may lead to the disputes) and regular renewals of the patents, which needs much clarity and more debate.
- * Documentation and registration as well as applicability are not accessible to the users of the technology.
- * Patent is not followed the geographical indication of the product/process which is difficult to prove due to lack of documentation.
- * Lack of coordination between the centre and the State governments regarding the subject on 'agriculture'.
- * Production and export subsidies are being provided by the governments in the developed countries along with the stable price policies for their farmers, which is lacking in India probably leading to the miseries like farmers suicides.

- * Rural migration, increase in child labour, displacement of the small and marginal farmers etc. are some the labour related problems which were seem to be got aggravated by WTO.
- * How the farmers germplasm used can be given the loyalty?
- * Can't India follow the combination of patents and sui genesis systems as USA?

Recommendations

- * Not only the plants / animals and their products but also the biotechnology related patents need to be discussed and drafted well with the consent of all member countries.
- * One of important agrarian issue of land ownership need to be defined for IPS.
- * Awareness /thorough literacy regarding the TRIPS need to be generated with the academicians and policy makers.
- * Patent rights allowed for 20 years (human generation) period is too long due to the fact that the technological changes are much faster than that period.
- * One school of thought was that the seeds should be excluded from TRIPS issue due to the fact that free exchange of seeds between the Indian farmers is an age old practice which need to be valued forever.
- * Documentation and registration of the patent are need to be provided to the end users.
- * Patenting authorities need to consider the geographical indication of the product/ process.
- * Good coordination between the policy decisions of the centre and implementation by the states regarding the State/ Centre subject on 'agriculture' need to be ensured.
- * India can also follow the combination of Patents and Sui genesis systems like in USA to benefit the farmers.

C. LAND USE AND CROP DIVERSIFICATION

Issues

- * Emergence of leased markets and reverse tenancy
- * Land use pattern is being influenced by contract farming and land leasing.
- * Cropping patterns are changing due to interlocked market, especially of labour market.
- * Making small and marginal farmers viable.

Recommendations

1. Entire agriculture land holdings must be covered under institutional finance
2. Interest rate should not be more than six per cent
3. Each village should be attached to bank branch which will assess the credit needs well ahead of the season
4. Interest should be waived in case of natural calamities
5. Agricultural promotion export zone with information intermediation
6. Producers associations and commodity cooperatives should be formed across the country
7. White paper on WTO and impact on agriculture should be issued by the government.
8. Transfer of CPRs to industry and private people must be stopped
9. Research on non price factors in agriculture should be stressed.

Specific Overall Recommendations

1. We have to carefully analyse the contentious issues without a prior committing to a viewpoint.

2. Market access in the pre-post STO must be analysed and one can work out relative market access.
3. Market access and domestic support must be tied together for the purpose of negotiations.
4. Presently we need to concentrate on enhancing net income accruing to the farmer.
5. Domestic market reforms is the most important among issues.
6. It is essential to promote consortiums (not cooperative) of small and marginal farmers to grow crops that have high returns and assured market.
7. Land use patterns is on the change due to changing consumption pattern – Demand pull from cereals to high value crops such as fruits and vegetable, cash crops.
8. The shift is more perceptible in coarse cereals – demand pull for their crops are necessary in terms of utilisation for feed.
9. Land market is changing in terms of strong emergence of course and hidden tenancy changing the cropping pattern. Should we formalise reversal of tenancy and land leasing as has been done in some states like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal?
10. For the success of the small farmers policy institutions and technology are important to bring the small farmers to the agribusiness fold so that they become viable and sustainable.
11. Relaxation of stamp duty, land consolidation, implement land ceilings act, tenancy reforms, operation Bhargha-distribution of government waste lands;
12. Promotion of location – specific technology tilted towards benefiting small and marginal farmers.
13. Eco-friendly/organised /sustainable system of production.
14. Credit – institutional finance – covering all the farmers; reasonable rate of interest.

19. ICT for Rural Development

Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are playing a facilitator's role for capacity building in various sectors of Rural Development. The planning, implementation, and monitoring of developmental programmes, projects, and related activities can be significantly strengthened by employing ICT. Workshops are conducted to assess the information needs, appropriate content, modalities of operation, access and sustainability for establishing information delivery points etc. As lack of information can be one of the key constraints for implementing various developmental programmes, ICT in Rural Development has been bringing a changing scenario with innovative initiatives like Bhoomi, e-seva, e-panchayat, tele-medicine, tele-education etc. With a greater focus in Rural development specially after Common Minimum programme (CMP), evolving towards decentralised governance ICT could play a crucial role for empowerment and wellbeing of rural masses. In this context, Centre for Information Technology and Quantitative Techniques, NIRD conducted this national workshop on ICT for Rural Development. Fifty-two delegates comprising experts in the field of Information Technology, Telemedicine and Social Science from various Government Departments, SIRDs, Corporate Sector, and NGOs participated. Objectives of the workshop are : a) To discuss various applications of ICT in Rural Development covering e-health, e-education and citizen centric services b) Identify key factors that influence effective implementation, c) Reinforce partnership models for development through ICT, d) Suggest policy interventions if any at center /state /village level and e) Arrive at appropriate technologies for connectivity and replicability. The Workshop commenced with inaugural remarks by the Director General of NIRD, Shri Lalit Mathur, emphasising the need and relevance of ICT for Rural Development. The Director General suggested the delegates to focus on the means of utilising ICT for benefiting and uplifting the rural masses. The delegates actively took part in the

deliberations with presentations and citing various experiences / success stories.

1. Issue : ICT FOR BETTER DELIVERY OF CITIZEN CENTRIC SERVICES

- * Application software is required to be consolidated at the national level (preferably using open source to the extent possible).
- * Ministry of PR and ministry of RD should workout with ministry of Communication and IT, arrangements for establishing good and reliable internet connectivity with appropriate technologies such as wireless and optical fiber in all the villages.
- * Communications and IT companies should be encouraged to provide IT infrastructure and connectivity in the rural areas and villages by providing incentives such as tax concessions/exemptions.
- * IT infrastructure support should be encouraged by local resource persons from local institutions such as colleges, polytechnics and ITIs (in the absence of adequate corporate presence in the rural area).
- * Ministry of PR and Ministry of RD should take necessary steps to provide good and reliable power supply /UPS /Solar power UPS in each panchayat.
- * *Content creation* : Appropriate organisational infrastructure and funds should be provided for creation of content in local languages and multi-media . The content so developed needs to be with relevant formats and understandable to the local people (both from local and global sources).
- * ICT mechanism should be utilised for making transparent statements on the allocation and monitoring of funds for each panchayat to the members of gram sabha and the village citizens.

- * Kiosks already being established under various projects will be recommended to be standardised with common services including e-panchayats.
- * Village knowledge centres are required to be set up for wide dissemination of local knowledge and also global knowledge across villages/regions/ states using multi-media and text to speech technologies in local languages.
- * Incentives should be given to village panchayats which take up ICT initiatives.
- * All panchayats should be provided with the government officials having ICT orientation as village secretary or executive officer.
- * Initiatives such as e-choupal should be encouraged by the local agencies.
- * *ICT Interventions for Economic Activity Development :*
- * Initiatives such as Rural Bazaar and the v-YAPAR will have to be implemented and scaled up to encourage and realise rural e-commerce.
- * Establishment /strengthening of rural e-seva centres/Rajiv internet village kiosks/ CICs / Jawahar Knowledge Centres with appropriate PPP models.

Issue : ICT FOR BETTER HEALTH CARE AND TELEMEDICINE

- * For preventive health care the potential of ICT can be explored for awareness building in best practices, forecasting outbreak of epidemics and necessary supply of medical/paramedical personnel and medicines.
- * Possibilities may be explored for utilising available infrastructure (Connectivity, Video conference related) for capacity building in various sectors like health, education, agriculture, counseling for employment which needs coordination by various departments at different levels (State, District, Mandal, Panchayats.).

- * All existing working models in e-health/telemedicine may be evaluated and adopted/replicated with suitable modifications.
- * Narayana Hrudayalaya project on telemedicine working in Karnataka — may be studied and adopted with suitable modifications on pilot basis.
- * The health insurance schemes introduced in various States should be studied and adopted with suitable modifications on pilot basis.
- * There is an acute shortage of doctors in rural areas. The government could consider a proposal to authorise the local panchayat to appoint doctors on contract from the local area.
- * The seats for specialised courses should be increased keeping in view the available resources and the requirements without compromising on quality of education.
- * Short-term courses may be introduced through distance learning in some of the specialised areas like cardiology, neurology, nephrology etc.
- * There are many concurrent efforts going on in telemedicine. There is a need to study different efforts for the purpose of integration and avoidance of duplication.
- * An agency or group of agencies can be designated as nodal agencies to coordinate distance learning effort using satellite channels in order to avoid duplication and synergises the efforts.
- * Budgetary allocations and tax concessions may be provided for medical equipment/drugs to improve rural health care services.
- * MCI should consider liberalising medico-legal issues so as to make available non-allopathic/paramedical community for medical care.
- * ICT to be used to develop virtual libraries. Use of tele-education and tele-health for awareness and education relating to healthcare, nutrition, and hygiene.

Issue : ICT FOR IMPROVED EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING

- * Connectivity options like optical fiber, wireless, VSAT etc. for distance learning / e-learning to be studied and appropriate option for different regions of the country to be recommended keeping in view the area / terrain
- * An agency or a group of agencies may be identified as nodal agency to coordinate the distance / e-learning efforts using satellite / Internet so as to standardise and synergise efforts.
- * Monitoring education programmes at village level should also cover awareness about National Level Programmes intended for rural masses. The community service centres /Village Knowledge Centers / CICs should function as a one-stop help for providing information on general aspects.
- * The PPP model for promoting education / delivery of services or generation of employment in rural communities may be promoted.
- * Proliferate literacy by training school children in ICT based literacy. Training and incentives may be provided in the form of money or “education vouchers” to support their further education.
- * The MANA TV(of Govt. of AP) channel like effort should be encouraged and coordination between departments / agencies is required for optimal delivery of services.
- * The courseware should be in multimedia and interactive in nature with regional language interface.
- * ICT should be harnessed to catalyse human resource development.
- * Policy of positive discrimination for women, weaker sections and backward communities may be encouraged.
- * ICT should be used to develop virtual libraries / universities.
- * Existing ICT infrastructure may be made accessible for rural masses.