DIGITAL Uttarakhand

State Consultation On:

'Strengthening Access & Delivery of Government Schemes Information & Entitlements in Uttarakhand': Role of Digital Connectivity, Content, Platforms and Solutions

26 August, 2016 (Friday) 09:00 AM – 05:00 PM

Hotel Aketa, No.113/2, Rajpur Road, Hathibarkala Estate, Dehradun,

Soochna Seva

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1. About the Consultation

Digital Uttarakhand State-Level Consultation, a first of its kind in Uttarakhand, sought to invite different stakeholders from the government, civil society organisations and others that are working towards strengthening the access and delivery of government schemes information and citizen entitlement benefits across the state.

The consultation sought to discuss and deliberate on issues and challenges in the area of access and delivery of information and entitlements, keeping in mind the geographical, infrastructural and connectivity challenges in Uttarakhand.

Further, the consultation sought to invite good practices that are taking place in the state in an effort towards creating models of examples in information and entitlements access and delivery for the citizens at their door steps. The purpose of the consultation was to highlight, document, encourage and populate such practices in Uttarakhand and other states. The scope and issues around digital connectivity, content, platforms and solutions to strengthen information and entitlement delivery will be a major focus area.

Additionally, the consultation aims to come out with a status note and key ideas with suggestions that can widen and expand the scope to strengthen the efforts of the government and other stakeholders to democratise and decentralise information and entitlement access and delivery to the last mile and last citizen in Uttarakhand.

2. The Consultation Background (Challenges in Access & Delivery of Government Schemes Information & Entitlement Services)

Access to information and government entitlements at village and community level have always been a real-time challenge for the common man in India, resulting in the failure of many developmental schemes. This has left out majority of genuine citizens out of such social and public welfare programmes.

Often, intended beneficiaries of public schemes and programmes are unable to access benefits due to:

1. Limited resources and capacities of government departments and staff at the panchayat, block and district levels to reach out to last mile locations and beneficiaries;
2. Limited capacities of village and community level organisations like SHGs, NGOs, CSOs, local associations to have timely access and delivery of government schemes information and entitlement benefits;
3. Weaknesses or gaps in processes and systems including lack of provisions for access to government scheme benefits at block or panchayat level locally;

4. Role of negative elements like role of middlemen, bad practices, role of money power that challenges government and other efforts to deliver information and entitlements to citizens;

5. Limited training and skills in staff and workers to deliver information and entitlements to citizens;

6. Limited connectivity and digital penetration, besides lack of community level access points (including at the panchayat level), for access and delivery of information and entitlement services;

7. Widespread lack of awareness among the people and citizens about government schemes and benefits;

8. Lack of timely review, evaluation and audit of institutional capacities and resources to deliver government schemes benefits to people to the last mile;

9. Limitations in real-time engagement between the community and the government and service providers to strengthen the provisions and mechanisms to deliver government schemes information and entitlements;

10. Limited experiments at government level to bring out a formal legal model of ensuring last mile government schemes information and entitlement benefits. Lack of good practices also challenging the access and delivery of schemes information and benefits to people.

3. Strengthening Information & Entitlements Access & Delivery

Real time information at the right time and the right point is a great empowering tool that can help eradicate poverty and backwardness.

1. There is a timely need to strengthen existing processes, systems, mechanisms in delivery and access of government schemes information and entitlement benefits.

2. There is timely need to map, evaluate, and develop capacities of public and private institutions, departments and agencies to deliver government entitlement information and services.

3. There is a need to regularly develop skills and capacities of staffs and workers to reach out to people till the last mile and deliver government entitlement information and services.

4. There is an urgent need to decentralise and democratise the whole framework of government entitlements information and benefits for citizens at the village and panchayat level.

5. There is realistic need to introduce, deliver and use Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools and platforms to strengthen and track the government

schemes information and entitlement access and delivery.

6. There is a need to experiment and sustain new models or examples of access and delivery of government schemes information and benefits.
7. There is a timely need for relevant stakeholders to come together and brainstorm ideas and programmes that can strengthen the information and entitlement ecosystem in a state.

The bigger advantage of timely delivery and access of government schemes information and benefits to people is that it helps stabilise our societies and communities and address various social, economic and empowerment needs. In the longer run, this promotes and strengthens our democracy through active citizen engagement and communication.

4. The Consultation Goal & Objective

The consultation was organised with the goal of building a deep conceptual understanding about 'Strengthening Information, Access & Delivery of Government Entitlements in Uttarakhand' to reach out to underserved and unreached regions of the state with information, entitlements and rights. It shall also help address gaps in the process of scheme deliveries at various levels such as panchayat, block, district and state through ideation and consultation on appropriate solutions.

Moreover, it would create opportunities to explore significant areas for information dissemination and citizen entitlements in depth; and share ideas in a way that will advance the thinking and actions of stakeholders to strengthen and develop capacities of local agencies to deliver citizen services better. It shall provide scope to collaborate in strengthening access and delivery of information and entitlement benefits for majority of people that are excluded from mainstream development processes and benefits.

Objectives:

1. To build a deep and conceptual understanding of the public scheme and entitlement delivery system in Uttarakhand;
2. To discuss the challenges that exists in information and entitlement access and delivery;
3. To discuss the issues of accessibility and feasibility at citizen level;
4. To explore new methods, ways and means to deliver public schemes information and access to entitlements;
5. To deliberate and highlight the role of digital connectivity, content, platform and solutions in information and entitlement access and delivery;
6. To explore the scope to collaborate to strengthen the existing information and entitlement provisions.

5. Expected Outcomes

1. Better understanding of the gaps and finding solutions in public schemes information delivery and entitlement benefits;
2. Better visualise the advantages of digital tools and applications including mobile applications to seek information, validation and regular updates on schemes and benefits;
3. Better possible collaborations for disseminating information and enabling benefits to extended beneficiaries;
4. Better understanding to develop Uttarakhand as a 'State of information and decentralised democracy' and making it a foremost state through examples of best government schemes information dissemination and citizen entitlements in India;
5. Presentation of a status paper on the challenges and scope in strengthening access and delivery of government schemes information and entitlement services in Uttarakhand.



INAUGURAL PLENARY



Guest of Honors

- N. Ravi Shankar, Former Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand
- Shri Dharmendra Singh, Additional Secretary IT & Director ITDA
- Shri Avdhash Kaushal, Rural Litigation & Entitlement Kendra

To achieve the objectives, the workshop was divided in to three sessions: Understanding the access and delivery of public schemes information and entitlement services in education and health sector in Uttarakhand; Understanding the access and delivery of public schemes information and entitlement services in social security and financial inclusion in Uttarakhand; and Strengthening access and delivery mechanisms in public schemes information and entitlement benefits in Uttrakhand.

In addition to this, an inaugural session and exhibition-cum-sale of products was also part of the workshop. Ravi Guria of DEF welcomed the participants and laid out the days' schedule. Guria, while opening the session, spoke of how today's economy is based on knowledge and information; and that the Indian economy is known for its information technology as China is known for its manufacturing sector. He also reminded that though this growth is phenomenal, only 30 per cent of the country's population is covered while the rest who live in rural area are yet to benefit from this revolution. He pointed out that it is to this 70 per cent that DEF caters to. It is a daunting task but this workshop is intended to chalk out the plan to achieve this goal, he said.



Syed S. Kazi from DEF further informed the audience about Soochna Seva's objective, its spread and the work it has done so far. He also informed about Soochna Seva's innovation to make the access more easy and reliable. He further added that the Soochna Seva Call Centre has expedited the spread of general information as well as information related to GES. He also informed the gathering about Soochna Seva App. Kazi concluded his remarks by stating that this consultation is intended to discuss the issues with GES in Uttarakhand, solutions to these issues and how best government departments and Soochna Seva can be aligned to reach out the last person. Soochna Seva Video was shown to the audience for better understanding of Soochna Seva.

Shri. N. Ravi Shankar while opening the session said that SSK was started to bridge the gap between people and their government. Along with this, they also started DS/DL programme which has benefited many people especially people living in remote areas who do not have access to such services. DEF has provided these services at a very reasonable rate. By sighting the Chanderiyaan project, he praised the DEF in providing e-Commerce option for marginalised weavers. He said, this way,





DEF has brought value addition to their lives.

He said that through SSK, people can get information related to health and education and, thus, become 'Soochna Sadak'. He added Soochna Seva is a non-governmental effort, which is very crucial for information dissemination.

Shri Avdhash Kaushal of RLEK said that according to the planning commission, 40 per cent of villages in Uttarakhand do not have roads. Most of them do not even have access to information. "I thank DEF which has became a platform to provide information to such communities," he added. Remembering the old days of telephone operators, who used to connect two different people, he said that DEF, through Soochna Seva, has become that 'operator'. Kaushal also apprised the audience on how RLEK has been instrumental in providing wireless to tribal communities.

He further pointed out that Android phones have become so handy today that it can become a tool of spreading information. He stated that these can be used to extract information. He added that smartphones have much more to offer than just pure communication. He stressed that in a knowledge society, information is key to becoming a good citizen. Therefore, training of women panchayat members in using mobile phones for information access is very crucial.

Dharmendar Singh, IT Director said that 4,250 'Devbhumi Jan Suvidha Kendra' are in operation at present that provide various digital services in Uttarakhand. He informed that 312 panchyats in Haridwar district have Wi-Fi connectivity and oth er areas would be covered soon under connectivity. He said that 1,66, 000 people have been enrolled for Aadhaar card through e- enrollments, and 1,25,000 people are digitally literate in Uttarakhand. The state government also maintains a portal for grievances redressal called Samadhan.

7. SESSION I and II –
Understanding Access & Delivery of Public Schemes Information & Entitlements in Health, Education, Social Security and Financial Inclusion in Uttarakhand

SESSION MODERATOR – Dr. Syed Sultan Kazi

SESSION PANELISTS

1. Shri. Avdhash Kaushal, Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra
2. Shri. SM Bijilwan, Information Officer, Tehri Gharwal District
3. Shri. Vijaya Jardhari, 'Beej Bachao Andolan' (Erstwhile Soldier of Chipko Movement)
4. Shri. CM Sharma, Dean, Uttarakhand University of Horticulture and Forestry



FOCAL POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- Status of public schemes and information and access to them for citizens seeking benefits under social security and financial inclusion
- Challenges in means and methods to dissemination information and deliver entitlements
- Role of community and community engagement in information access and entitlement benefits, including public grievance system
- Any limitations in systems, processes, mechanisms, and governance structure at village and panchayat levels in access and delivery of public schemes information & entitlements

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SESSION –

Mr. S.M. Bijilwan, who is posted as a Soochna Adhikari in Tehri Gharwal district, stressed on the need for constant communication between various players. He informed the gathering that his department and the government of Uttarakhand have listed services of 24 departments; and information for all of these would soon be available online in a systematic manner. Meanwhile, SSK is already playing a very crucial role. He stressed that for more accessibility, better coordination is required between various stakeholders to achieve full accessibility and reach. The information dissemination form should have elements of fun and should be broadcasted by cable operators.

Shri Avdhash Kaushal of RLEK stressed that along with information, one also needs to impart literacy to the beneficiary. Sighting PMJDY scheme, he added that financial inclusion is a good effort but what is also required is that the masses be informed about the necessity of savings. He also mentioned the Forest Rights Act and how people are aware of their rights but not on the legal aspects, which often leads to exploitation.

Shri. Vijaya Jardhari of 'Beej Bachao Andolan' said that having accurate information is crucial for a democracy. What is digital? What are its implications on one's life? How does it can change a life for better? These are some questions which need to be taught to rural people and people living in remote areas because it is they who need this more than anyone else. He said that the Right to Information Act is a very good step towards a true democracy but the negative side of the RTI is portrayed too often. "It seems like this fine Act has become a 'complaint box' instead of corner stone of vibrant democracy," he said, adding that it's very important to inform about GES but it is also important to inform the bottlenecks of GES as we are better placed in doing this.



SHORT SESSION ON e-NGO

Shri. Ravi Guria, while interacting with participants, pointed out the benefits of having a website for an organisation. He then elaborated on different types of websites and their purpose. He also stressed that one can get a .ngo website after going through a rigorous validation process. These websites act as a platform for publicity, fund raising, marketing, consultation and technical advice at both international and national level. He informed the gathering that over the years DEF has gained expertise in designing websites and DEF is ready to provide its services to the grassroots-level organisations in Uttarakhand too. In fact, it has already taken many organisations in the state online. These services are available for varying affordable packages that start from Rs. 5000 and go upto Rs. 20,000.

8. PLENARY III – Strengthening Access & Delivery Mechanisms in Public Schemes Information & Entitlement Benefits in Uttarakhand: Role of Digital Connectivity, Content, Platforms and Solutions' Session III

SESSION MODERATOR – Dr. Syed Sultan Kazi

SESSION PANELIST

1. Shri. Deepak Kumar, Secretary IT, Government of Uttarakhand
2. Smt. Rajkumari Singh, Gharwal Community Development and Welfare Society
3. Shri. RS Goyal Senior Adviser and Regional Director, Ramana Group, Dehradun
4. Shri. S.M. Bijilwan, Information Officer, Tehri Gharwal District, Uttrakhand
5. Shri. Rajender Singh Negi, Samudayik Radio Henvalvani, Tehri Gharwal District



DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SESSION

Smt. Raj Kumari Singh from Gharwal Community Social Development stated that she and her organisation have been working on women's health since 1991. Over the years, they have seen the Mother Mortality Rate drop in the region but it has been an extremely daunting task, courtesy the topography of Uttarakhand where accessibility is always an issue.

By sighting various instances, she highlighted how lack of communication and dearth of vital information on health, nutrition and social security have led to the loss of mothers' lives. "Hence, we need to develop a system where the right kind of information is available to mothers in real time," she said while requesting for developing an app that makes information flow easy.

Shri. RS Goyal of Rammana Groups agreed that accessibility has always been an issue in Uttarakhand. Remote areas are not well connected, besides frequent landslides and heavy rainfall and do not permit good roads. Thus, technology could be a good mode of communication. Due to various reasons, people in need of medications cannot avail the facilities or access relevant and timely healthcare. Telemedicine and information exchange can solve this problem. He lauded the SSK model and said that it can be replicated at state level.

Shri. RS Negi said that there is a great divide which is as ancient as the human history itself. According to him, at one side of this divide are people who always listen and on the other side are a few people who have only one role and that is to speak. He stressed that one needs to give these people space to voice out their concerns. We also must educate people to raise voice against injustices. He said that we need to create small and accessible platforms for these people so that these people also have a say while deciding things for themselves. Shri. SM Bijilwan said that technology is a double edged sword. Technology – no doubt has brought



change but is this change a positive one is a question which we need to ask.

Shri. Deepak Kumar, Secretary IT Department, Govt. of Uttarakhand informed that the department has achieved near total state wide connectivity by establishing SWAN state wide area network. He further stated that all blocks of the state are connected with respective districts while all government departments are connected to each other. He mentioned that now his department is working on increasing the speed of data transfer and in future we are planning to connect all gram panchayats to blocks trough National Optic Fiber Network (NOFN). Improving citizen services is also on their agenda.

Shri Syed S. Kazi at the end of the session thanked the participants for their valuable time and views.

9. CONCLUSION

The main aim of this report is to provide essence of the state-level Consultation that took place in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. The consultation was a first of its kind in Uttarakhand, that sought to invite different stakeholders from the government, civil society organisations and others that are working towards strengthening the access and delivery of government schemes information and citizen entitlement benefits across the State.

The workshop was intended to give a platform to discuss and deliberate on issues and challenges in access and delivery of information and entitlements, keeping in mind the geographical, infrastructural and connectivity challenges in Uttarakhand. A different approach was utilised in order to build a conceptual understanding about public schemes, programmes and process to avail information or benefit. The workshop gave a platform to various stakeholders to interact, engage and debate under one roof about the challenges faced by citizens and communities, methods to deliver information about pubic schemes and working status of local bodies such as government agencies, NGOs and civil societies, towards improvement of the information dissemination environment at the State level.

The efforts were fruitful as the participants unravelled the grave issues that were hidden under the rubble of ignorance and suppression. Limitations of information dissemination and lack of citizen entitlement were broadly discussed. There were recommendations about redefining the delivery and access of relevant information so that it could effectively reach the last mile beneficiary. Additionally, shortcomings of the government delivery framework were shared by the participants, based on which recommendations were made to improve partnership and collaborations between government agencies, NGOs and civil societies so that they acknowledge information dissemination as their collective responsibility.

ANNEXURE

Figure 1 Press Release in 'Jagran Samvaddata'

जागरण संवाददाता, देहरादून: डिजिटल इंपावर्मेंट फाउंडेशन ने प्रदेश के विभिन्न हिस्सों से आए ग्रामीणों

जागरण संवाददाता, देहरादून: डिजिटल इंपावर्मेंट फाउंडेशन ने प्रदेश के विभिन्न हिस्सों से आए ग्रामीणों को डिजिटल सेवाओं व योजनाओं की जानकारी दी।

शुक्रवार को राजपुर रोड स्थित एक होटल में आयोजित डिजिटल उत्तराखंड कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ करते हुए सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी सचिव दीपक कुमार ने बताया कि लोग किन-किन सेवाओं व योजनाओं की जानकारी ऑनलाइन प्राप्त का सकते हैं। अपर सचिव धर्मेंद्र सिंह ने बताया कि डिजिटल उत्तराखंड की दिशा में राज्य किस तरह आगे बढ़ रहा है। रूलक संस्था के अध्यक्ष पद्मश्री अवधेश कौशल ने सुझाव दिए कि किस तरह आमजन को तकनीक के करीब लाकर इंटरनेट की जानकारी दी जा सकती है। पूर्व मुख्य सचिव एन रविशंकर ने डिजिटल माध्यम को प्रभावी बनाने के उपाय सुझाए। फाउंडेशन के उप निदेशक सैय्यद काजी ने बताया टिहरी जनपद में पांच ब्लॉक में 25 हजार से अधिक लोगों को डिजिटल उत्तराखंड का प्रशिक्षण दिया जा चुका है। इस अवसर पर टिहरी के प्रबंधक बृजेश कुमार, दीपशिखा, सीएम बिष्ट, सुशील सकलानी, पद्म गुसाईं, विजय जड़धारी, राजेंद्र नेगी, प्रदीप कोठारी, बृजेश पंवार आदि उपस्थित रहे।

Figure 2 Press Release in Amar Ujala

डिजिटल सेवाओं की जानकारी दी

देहरादून। डिजिटल इंपावरमेंट फाउंडेशन की ओर से ग्रामीणों की एक कार्यशाला का आयोजन किया गया। कार्यशाला में ग्रामीणों को डिजिटल सेवाओं और योजनाओं की जानकारी दी गई। राजपुर रोड स्थित एक होटल में आयोजित डिजिटल उत्तराखंड कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी सचिव दीपक कुमार ने किया। उन्होंने ग्रामीणों को डिजिटल सेवाओं की जानकारी देने के साथ-साथ आनलाइन योजनाओं के बारे में बताया। अपर सचिव धर्मेंद्र सिंह ने बताया कि डिजिटल उत्तराखंड की दिशा में राज्य किस तरह आगे बढ़ रहा है। ब्यूरो

देवभूमि को कलंकित कर रही सरकार

अमर उजाला ब्यूरो

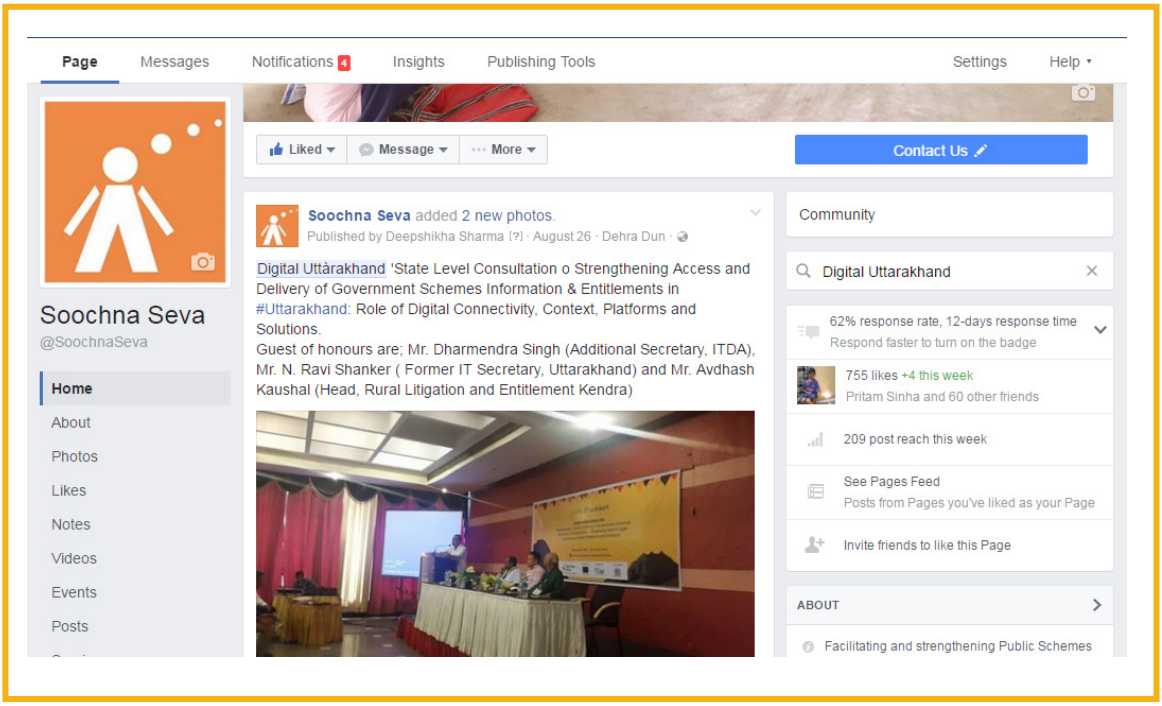
विकासनगर/चकराता। भाजपा की चकराता और विकासनगर में हुई पर्दाफाश रैली में वक्ताओं ने प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार को अब तक के इतिहास की सबसे भ्रष्ट सरकार करार दिया। कार्यकर्ताओं से प्रदेश की कांग्रेस सरकार के भ्रष्टाचार को जन-जन तक पहुंचाने की बात कही।

रैली में शामिल हुए हरिद्वार के सांसद और पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री डॉ. रमेश पोखरियाल निशंक ने प्रदेश सरकार पर तीखा प्रहार करते हुए कहा कि आने वाले चुनाव में जनता कांग्रेस को उखाड़ फेंकेगी। जनता सरकार के भ्रष्टाचार से त्रस्त हो चुकी है। उत्तराखंड भारत का मस्तक है और प्रदेश के मुखिया घोटाले पर घोटाले कर इसको कलंकित कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने रैली के माध्यम से चुनावी शंखनाद करते हुए कहा कि प्रदेश में जंगलराज कायम है। जनता को जंगलराज से बचाने के लिए प्रदेश को भाजपा की सरकार की जरूरत है।

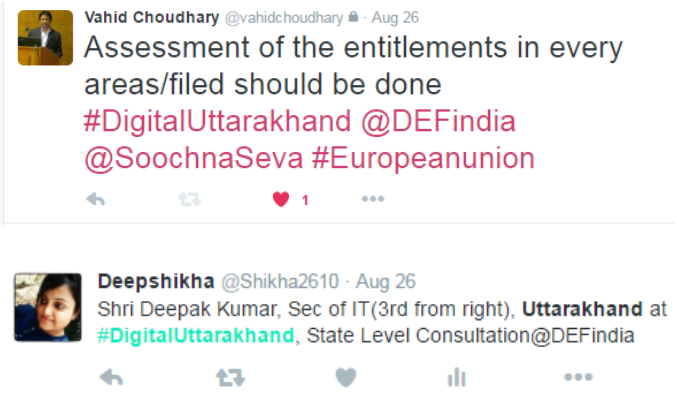


जनसभा को संबोधित करते सांसद डा. रमेश पोखरियाल निशंक।

Facebook Report



Twitter Report



Notes

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