State Consultation On

‘Strengthening Access & Delivery of Government Schemes Information & Entitlements in Jharkhand’

24th April, 2017 (Monday)

Venue: Maplewood Hotel, Diocesan Village, Siromtoli Chowk, Old Hazaribagh Rd, Ranchi, Jharkhand 834001

Time: 09:00 a.m. – 05:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION

A State consultation on "Strengthening Governance and Citizen Engagement Digitally for Last Mile Access and Delivery of Public Schemes Information and Entitlements" has been organised on 24th April 2017 in Ranchi Jharkhand.

The Consultation has been organized jointly by 5 implementing partners and European Union to identify innovations and best practices regarding access and delivery of information and entitlements keeping in mind the geographical, infrastructural and connectivity challenges in Jharkhand state.

The Delegation of European Union has launched the programme "Improving access to information of public schemes in backward districts in India" in January 2014. In order to implement the programme in 60 BRGF Districts of 20 states across India covering 20 million people, 14 Partner organisations have been selected from India.

Jharkhand is one of the 20 states which is being covered by 5 grassroots organisations in its different districts and blocks; Digital Empowerment Foundation (Ranchi), Action Aid (Latehar), PRADAN (Hazaribagh and Koderma), Welthungerhifle (Sahibganj, Dumka, Pakur & Khunti) and Find Your Feet (Dumka, Pakur, Jamtara and Godda). It's been three years the programme has impacted the lives of thousands of people and there is more scope to strengthen the efforts of the government and other stakeholders to democratize and decentralize information and entitlement access and delivery to the last mile citizens in Jharkhand.

The Consultation has been organised to identify innovations and best practices regarding access and delivery of information and entitlements keeping in mind the geographical, infrastructural and connectivity challenges in Jharkhand state. The discussion attempted to strengthen the efforts of the government and other stakeholders to democratize and decentralize information and entitlement access and delivery to the last mile citizens in Jharkhand.

It has also helped to recognize the best practices taken by organisations towards strengthening the access and delivery of government schemes information and citizen entitlement benefits on the following thematic areas:

- Strengthening Governance and Citizen Engagement Digitally for Last Mile Access And Delivery of Public Schemes Information and Entitlements
- Participatory Planning through Yojna Banao Abhiyan and the role of Social Audit for better Transparency and Accountability in Jharkhand"
- Participatory Learning and Action for improved mother, child care and nutrition
- Participatory School Development Planning for Right to Education

The consultation has 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.

Discussion Points

SESSION 1: Participatory Planning Through Yojana Banao Abhiyan and the Role of Social Audit for Better Transparency and Accountability in Jharkhand

Panelists: James Herenj, Convener, NREGA Watch Jharkhand; Gurjeet Singh, State Social Audit Unit; Balram, Advisor to Supreme Court of India on Right to Food, Jharkhand; Babita Sinha, State Resource Person for Social Audit

- The prime focus of the session was on emphasizing the role of 'Yojana Banao Abhiyan' in making NREGA more effective in the state. Gurjeet Singh stated that the success of NREGA lies to a great extent on how effectively the various schemes are planned through the 'Yojana Banao Abhiyan', which is primarily planning schemes within NREGA through NREGA.

- James Herenj gave a brief update on the 'Yojana Banao Abhiyan' carried out in Jharkhand. The state Government had carried out this flagship initiative to prepare plans for NREGA with the villagers. However, the survey conducted at the ground level clearly showed lack of planning at the Government level along with poor implantation. The survey was given the name of 'Yojna Dhoondho Abhiyan' to figure out the ground reality. The key focus of the survey was on 'Dobha Construction' (farm ponds), which was heavily pushed by the Government, including conducting *Vishesh Gram Sabhas* for passing the resolution, with slogans like *"Jharkhand Ki Shobha, Har Khet Mein Dobha".* The state Government had earlier promised to build 1 lakh Dobhas under NREGA scheme. It was shared that 182 Dobhas were surveyed in September 2016 in 4 districts of Jharkhand, i.e. Giridih, Simdega, Khunti and Garhwa. Only those schemes were selected which were reflected in MGNREGA website as ongoing or complete. It came to light that in 30% cases the work had not even begun and 50% schemes were sanctioned in the barren lands where no agriculture work was being done.

- Babita Sinha added that a bottom up approach has been tried through Yojna Banao Abhiyan, which is a welcome change from the top down approach which is typically used while planning schemes for the people. This makes the overall process a more participatory one. Over the years people have been made understand the constitutional

mandate of NREGA, i.e. the jobs given to people is not a favor from the Government, but it is their due right mandated by the constitution. She also added that there have been budgeting issues within the planning of Yojana Banao Abhiyan as in several instances the material budget has been much more than the labour budget.

- Some insights were shared about the Social Audit pilots conducted in 2015, which tried to overcome the earlier shortcomings of the Social Audit processes carried out in 2009. In the earlier process, the District administration with the help of CSOs and local volunteers conducted social audits all across the state and Gram Sabha and hearings at Block and Districts were organized. However, as the implementing agencies were charge of social audits themselves which affected the neutrality of the process. In the year 2015 Social Audit pilots were held in 49 Panchayats as per the process and Protocols of Audit of Scheme rules 2011 on the behest of MORD, Govt. of India with the support of NIRD. Under Rule 4 of MNREGA Audit of scheme rules, 2011 Govt. of Jharkhand has decided to in house the State Audit Unit (SAU) within Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) and further establish it as an independent unit after 2 years. The SAU has played a key role in building capacities of Gram Sabha for conducting social audit, along with deploying suitable resource persons at Village/Block/District/State level. The SAU has created awareness amongst the community about their rights and entitlements and has facilitated verification of records with primary stakeholders. Recruitment and training of State Resource Persons (SRPs), District Resource Persons (DRPs), Block Resource Persons (BRPs) and Village Resource Persons (VRPs) was carried out in the due process. The notification for the first batch social audit exercise was issued on 29th December, 2016 and till April 2016 social audit exercise in 306 Gram Panchayats had been covered. For the year 2017-18 Social Audit of 1500 Gram Panchayats on MGNREGA and Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) has been planned along with Social Audit of IAY/ICDS in 500 Gram Panchayats.

- Balram mentioned that it was not expected earlier that participatory planning at village level would work. Yojna Banao Abhiyan helped in establishing the fact that schemes could be planned even at village level. Such an initiative has enabled the villagers to decide their priorities, plan welfare projects and execute them. He also mentioned about the phases of “blanket planning” in Jharkhand, such as 1 Lakh Trees, 1 Lakh Ponds, 1 Lakh Ditches, 1 Lakh Wells, etc. He mentioned that Dobhas are important for Jharkhand, but it is not acceptable that Govt. only pushes for construction of Dobhas. He added that Social Audit has set an exemplary model in Jharkhand.

SESSION 2: Strengthening Governance and Citizen Engagement Digitally For Last Mile Access and Delivery of Public Schemes Information and Entitlements

Panelists: Murari M. Choudhary, NEEDS; Dr. B.K. Jha, Asstt. Professor(Agriculture Extn. Education), Birsa Agricultural University; Manoj Kabi, Faculty, State Agricultural Management & Extension Training Institute (SAMETI), Jharkhand

- Murari M. Choudhary from NEEDS gave a presentation on Mobile for Mothers (MFM) Mobile App. Mobile for Mother (MFM) is a project initiated by NEEDS for the application of multimedia capabilities of common phones to deliver educational and health care information to pregnant women regardless of their literacy level of education. The project was architected with the support of SIMAVI & with the technical support from Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) which has launched a cloud based platform to deploy MFM. The platform includes dual synchronization of client data which allows data to be shared between Sahiya and Program Managers and use multimedia features. In Jharkhand, Sahiya is the term used in place of ASHA workers. The pilot for MFM project was conducted in Littipara Block in Pakur District of Jharkhand. Littipara Block is the 2nd poorest Block in India. Murari shared that in 273 villages of Littipara, there were earlier only 50 Sahiyas, however now the number has gone up to 130. The working of M4M App was presented in detail and the salient feature of it was that it also worked on Java-enabled feature phones, thus avoiding dependency on android-based smartphones. Some statistics related to the MFM App was shared in the presentation, such as number of pregnant women enlisted with the app, Ante Natal Care Status monitored, Post Natal Care Status monitored, Abortion Cases monitored, etc. The process of Data Flow of MFM App was explained in the presentation. The process starts with Sahiyas collecting data of ANC, INC and PNC during the home visits on MFM App and then the data is transmitted to a server from the mobiles. Then the data is downloaded from the web server to a computer and the data cleaning is done by the data manager on a daily basis. Further, the data is verified by the Field Supervisors and then the verified data is merged in the master database. After that, a monthly Dash-board Report is prepared which is shared with Govt. Officials and ANMs. This close monitoring of maternal health of the pregnant women, along with timely delivery of relevant information has made a visible impact in the pilot area.

- Dr. B.K. Jha mainly shared about Birsa Agricultural University's initiative of Birsa Hariyali Community Radio Station to expand their reach to the farmers in the region. He highlighted the whole concept of community radio and how it differs from traditional Radio/TV Channels as there is not much scope of feedback with the traditional channels.

Moreover, as the typical Radio/TV Channels cater to a large audience, their content is usually not customized for a small group of people according to their need. He added that Community Radio goes with the spirit of democracy, i.e. of the people, by the people and for the people. He mentioned that Community Radio Station in Birsa Agricultural University was set up in 2008 with the help of World Development Foundation and Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology. A variety of programs were launched by the Community Radio which included topics such as Agriculture, Health, Education, etc. Specific efforts were undertaken for mapping the reach of Radio Station through surveys, where people visited areas on their own with the radio sets to determine till what range the signals were reaching. Moreover, while doing surveys with the community the feedback came that there was a high demand for Nagpuri songs, which was also catered on public demand. He went on to explain the challenges with setting up a community radio station and the various bottlenecks in the process including getting the license from the Government. Making a Community Radio Station financially viable is one of the key challenges as the revenue from advertisements/sponsorships is quite limited. In his opinion, ideally the running cost of a Community Radio Station should be borne by the community itself, but this usually doesn't happen.

He also shared some insights on the efforts towards media convergence, such as radio talks being uploaded to a website, so that it could be retrieved later. He mentioned about a survey conducted back in 2013, which showed that even in villages one-fourth of the phones were smartphones, though the sample size was a limited one. Some other recent efforts carried out by Birsa Agricultural Extension were mentioned such as Panchayat Level Weather Forecast where they have collected Latitude & Longitude of each panchayat. Nearly 4000 gram panchayats have been covered with minute information being captured such as wetness of the soil. Birsa Radio Station also has a web portal is 7 languages; a mobile application is running in 3 languages.

Apart from that the department has also been running a Call Center for the Farmers and it was figured out that 90% of the users were satisfied with the automated responses through IVR. In cases the farmers were not satisfied with the IVR responses, then they can leave a voicemail, which is delivered to inboxes of selected university professors and the reply is sent to them through Auto Call Response.

- Manoj Kabi from SAMETI, Jharkhand stressed on the importance of Information Systems for the benefit of people at the ground, especially farmers. He said that the need of a monitoring mechanism is vital to ensure that desired information is reaching to the

people at the ground. He also underscored the need of converting data on beneficiaries into useful information. For example, if farmers of a region specialize in a particular type of crop, then more information should be delivered to them regarding that specific crop than generic information on crops. He also cited instance of a training program where they had given training to 25 Trainees and then the information of these 25 Trainees was passed on to the people at the ground so that they could contact one of these trainees based on their location. This kind of process helps in leveraging the limited resources. He also talked about the need of using 'pull services' for feature phones, that users accessing information based on their specific requirements than just relying on generic SMS, which may or may not be relevant to them. He mentioned the usage of USSD services by the Government to use these pull features by the farmers, such as name of a dealer, using phones without internet services. He made a brief mention about the National E-Governance Plan in Agriculture, which is working towards delivering services to the farmers at their doorstep. There was a brief mention of the portal Vikaspedia by one of the audience, where this portal provides useful information to people on various topics such as Agriculture, Health, Education, Social Security, Energy, etc. and the project is being run by C-DAC Hyderabad.

SESSION 3: Participatory Learning and Action for Improved Maternal and New Born Health

Panelists: Rajkumar Gope, Ekjut; Babita Sinha, Trustee, Abhivyakti Foundation; Haldhar Mahto, Public Health Resource Network (PHRN)

- Rajkumar Gope from EKJUT briefed about the work of his organization in improving maternal and newborn health in deprived rural areas of Jharkhand and Odisha through empowerment of tribal communities. Further, he gave a presentation on Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) explaining various aspects of it and how this approach has benefited them in improving outcomes. One of the key features of PLA is Community Mobilization where he explained Community Mobilization as, *"A capacity building process through which community members, groups or organizations plan, carry out, and evaluate activities in a participatory and sustained basis to improve their health and other conditions, either on their own initiative or stimulated by others."* The Participatory Learning & Action Cycle is carried out in four steps, viz i) Identifying and prioritizing problems by the community using 6 pebbles approach ii) Understanding causes and effects with pictorial stories and identifying strategies which are shared in the community meetings iii) Implementing the chosen strategies iv) Evaluating their activities. Further, details were shared about the 'Ekjut Trial' which was carried out

during the period 2005-2008. The data was shared that intervention with women groups led to a 45% reduction in Neonatal Mortality Rate between this period. Similarly, insights were shared about the 'JOHAR Trial' conducted between 2010-2012 in 5 districts (3 in Jharkhand + 2 in Odisha) where 178 ASHA workers conducted monthly PLA meetings with women's groups in addition to their routine work, which led to 32% reduction in Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) and 36% reduction in Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). The population covered under this trial was 1,56,519. Ekjut's PLA approach has received endorsements from World Health Organization (WHO).

- Babita Sinha shared about the LANN approach used for improving knowledge and practices related to good nutrition in the marginalized communities, especially with a focus on women. LANN is an acronym for Linking Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Nutrition which was developed in Laos in 2010 for a consortium of 7 INGOs. LANN is a community-based, multi-sectoral training approach and 'toolbox' for nutrition education. LANN trainings focus on "green nutrition" (family food consumption and food acquisition from own production, wild collection or purchase) linking "what to eat" with "where foods should come from". LAN trainings complement with more health focused nutrition activities provided by Government and other organizations. LANN promotes good nutrition as a 'Life Skill' focusing on various aspects such as food quantity, tasty meals, well-being, food quality, dignity and gender balance. The outcome of LANN trainings is in the form of improved knowledge of the participants, i.e. understanding their family nutrition problems in practical terms and behavior change, i.e. taking appropriate actions to address the problems (e.g. at the cooking pot, agricultural production, natural resource management, hygiene, mother and child care, etc.). The expected impact areas of LANN training are i) Food access and availability ii) Food consumption iii) Hygiene/Health and iv) Care.

- Due to lack of time in the session Haldhar Mahto said that he did not have much to add and that most of the points he wanted to keep were covered by the above two panelists.

SESSION 4: Participatory School Development Planning For Right to Education

Panelists: Baikunth Pandey, Educationist and ex-officer JEPC; A.K. Singh, Conveyor, Jharkhand RTE Forum; Krishna Kant, Abhivyakti Foundation

- Baikunth Pandey gave his presentation in a slightly different manner unlike other participants making it more interactive during the presentation and covering topics such

as quality education, how current schooling system fails to cater to the students outside the mainstream and the need of a participatory approach to be followed by the schools. He strongly put out his argument that schools fail to recognize the life skills acquired by the children who are not able to go to schools and only judge them by their reading and writing skills. Moreover, the curriculums designed for schools are made in a very top-down approach without taking a regular feedback from the students. He also cited the shortcomings of our traditional schooling system which forces children to learn specific things rather than providing an enabling environment to children to encourage them to learn things on their own.

- A.K. Singh stressed on the role of School Development Plan (SDP) and School Management Committees (SMCs) for successful implementation of RTE. He mentioned that the involvement of the community and particularly the members of school management committees were crucial for successful implementation of SDP and overall improvement in the quality of education. School Development Plan (SDP), aimed at an overall improvement in the standard of government-run schools was introduced this year in Jharkhand on a trial basis.

- Krishna Kant emphasized that the monitoring and planning in schools should be synchronized. If there is no mechanism to incorporate the learnings during the monitoring in the subsequent planning, then this approach does not have much utility. He also mentioned about usage of a mobile app while working with schools, where the data captured through the mobile app helped in incorporating the feedback for improving the learning outcomes.