

*Staff Orientation Training Programme
On NREGA & RTI*

Projects

*Social Watch Group for Social Accountability and Governance &
Citizen Against Corruption*

*Venue : Chowduar, ASHIANA Campus
Date 4th to 6th February 2010*

Partnership for Transparency Funds (PTF)



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It was believed that decentralization of governance through Panchayatiraj system will pave the way for more accountable governance where power will be in the hand of the people and they will be capable to wield it against erring elements. But on the contrary the system was less responsive towards this decentralization of power and village people were still subject to corruption and deficit of effective service delivery. Effective public services have a central role to play in poverty reduction, moreover in a ginormous scheme like NREGS, which is considered to be the most promising and progressive scheme in last 60 yrs. But it couldn't remain immune from corruption and has shown several anomalies when it comes to implementation in the right manner. Transparency and accountability therefore is most crucial to any development paradigm and are two most important requisite for good governance.

Project Mandate

Strengthen citizen's voice to demand accountability, also to strengthen the social watch process where in the citizen participate in the monitoring of the entire process there by making the system more transparent and public officials more accountable.

NREGA & RTI in the context of the project

NREGA

In the proposed project we have used NREGA in the context of improving Governance, by putting an end to the the ignorance on the part of the people through policy advocacy on their rights and entitlements. Thus checking the corruption in NREGS is a tool for social and economic change and would provide an opportunity to mobilize communities to demand and benefit towards livelihood.

RTI

One of the most progressive act of recent times is RTI which can be catalyst in bringing transparency in the system. Our focus is also to given the power of information in helping create a better environment of governance, we hope that this RTI edict will play a key role in exercising control over delivery mechanisms and will enable people to assert their rights as guaranteed under different development schemes

In this context a 3 day training programme was organized at ASHIANA, Chowduar for the orientation of the staff as well as some social watch group members.

Venue : Chowduar, ASHIANA Campus

Date 4th to 6th February 2010

Participants: Sambandh Staff involved in both PTF and ANSA project also some social watch group members

- Training Method
- Group Discussion
- Lecture
- Audio Visual Presentation

- Demonstrations
- Case Study Discussion
- Group Activity

4th Feb 2010

The session began with lighting up off the lamp by Sri Chitta Behera, freelance publicist and social activist who has been instrumental in demystifying the jargons of the Act and in translating the same into Oriya for easy access of people. The staff and other participants had a formal introduction followed by which the sessions began.

First Session

Resource Person/ Facilitator

The Executive Director began the session by explaining why we have congregated here and what is the purpose of both the projects. He also narrated about the importance of Social Accountability and how crucial it is to ensure effective public service delivery system.

Major Points we discussed

- **Civic Engagement (People's Participation)**
- **Understanding Social Accountability**
- **Social Accountability in the context of NREGA**
- **Corruption and how deeply it has penetrated(Not only in India but other European and Latin American Countries)**
- **Key Triggers**
 - a) **Budget Allocation**
 - b) **Expenditure Tracking**
 - c) **Problem of Monitoring**
 - d) **Problem of Participation and Awareness**
- **The factual figures revealed that corruption is maximum at the procurement level which is core to service delivery system,**

Reasons for corruption

The Three Ds

- **Deficit of Information**
- **Deficit of Participation**
- **Deficit of Accountability**

The ED also explained to the core implementing team that this project is a small but significant step towards radicalization of Right to Accountability, where all erring officials not complying with their duties will be hold responsible and will be subject to stringent action.

Followed by this the resource person Sri Chitta Behera explained the participants about the act and its deliverables and how it can be catalyst in eradication of poverty and providing livelihood opportunities to the rural people.

Emphasis was laid on bringing out the response from the participants in a participatory manner and put forward raw and real problems encountered at the field level through a group exercise. The participants were asked to write down the problems in their cards



and the same were posted on a board for further discussion .Following difficulties were listed by the participants

Major problems that emerged

- ❖ Fund Diversion (Cultural function, sports and other)
- ❖ Erring officials
- ❖ Corruption at all level from VLW to the engineers
- ❖ Bogus Job card issued
- ❖ Skewed data with regard to wage payment, employment & enrollment.
- ❖ Misappropriation of funds
- ❖ Lack of ownership of the Act
- ❖ Dormant PRI
- ❖ Substandard work
- ❖ Planned Manipulation
- ❖ Bogus social audit / lack of people participation in social audit.

Further the participants were also asked to share their experiences of making a difference to the ongoing embezzlement of the Act and initiatives taken by them to bring some change in the existing system.

- ❖ Massive public demonstration before panchayat & BDO at podagan and lobbied with panchayat. Issue of 200 job cards and facilitated in opening of bank accounts.
- ❖ At Baunsanali GP through a joint campaign involving media representative 300 job cards were issued.
- ❖ Also at Thakurmunda Kesidiha block the mismanagement of the NREGS officials was brought to the notice of the collectors and necessary action was taken, which ensured better service delivery.

The group also discussed the possible reasons for such misappropriation and unseemly enforcement of the Act.

- ❖ Lack of sustained and collective campaign
- ❖ Competent people are not engaged in the implementing team.
- ❖ Absence of vibrant social watch group for the monitoring of the work
- ❖ The Grievance redressal cell is dysfunctional in most cases.

It is issues like the above which have been addressed under this project to propagate sustained and collective campaign, sensitizing the citizens on rights and entitlements, engaging competent social watch group members for regular monitoring of the entire process, providing all necessary support and assistance for submitting grievances and following up the same.

Grievance submission under RTI and NREGA

Sri Chitta Behera also informed the participants that the NREGA has an in built grievance redressal machinery and it is therefore not necessary to sought the assistance of RTI in the elementary cases. He then went on to explain the strata of grievance submission.

Sl No	Level	Reporting officer	Time limit
1	Block Level	Programme Officer	7 days
2	District Level	PDDRD and Collector	15 Days
3	State level	SEG Commissioner and Chief Minister	No specific
4	Centre	Central Employment Guarantee Council	No specific

For any issues related to deprivation under the scheme of any job seeker or any corruption taking place at any level, the grievance can be submitted at following levels. Though it's not a hierarchical process however it is expected that the complainant must register the issue at the lower strata and if it is not addressed within the stipulated time, then the complainant is free to go the higher level. In case of financial corruption / or embezzlement of funds if sufficient proof is available then the case can be directly reported to the central authority.

He also laid emphasis on using NREGA grievance cell for seeking data clarification and registering complain as it's an inbuilt system and easy to access. Though RTI to is a progressive act and empowers the people to demand accountability from public officials but the NREGA act itself is so big and promising that the issues can be addressed under the act only. Following may elabore it better

NREGA	RTI
No exemption condition	Exemption under section 8
3rd party involvement	3rd party involvement restricted
Information to be provided with in 7 days	Information to be provided with in 30 days
No/ Nominal Charges	Rs 10/- for submission of grievance
Process is much easier	Procedural/ Technical competence may be required.

According to Sri Chitta Behera, NREGS has been designed in such a way that the accessibility to the scheme becomes easier and hassle free for the beneficiaries. Further he adds

- ❖ NREGS grievance mechanism is not only easier but has more relevance to people than any other act.
- ❖ Any document under NREGS can be inspected at the panchayat office and one does not necessarily need to file an RTI for that.
- ❖ There is no exemption condition of disclosure of the information.
- ❖ All the information's like must rolls, information on labour budget, sanctioned works Grampanchayat wise, information on expenditure & project completion against plan are to be displayed in public domain.

Some other important features of the scheme are

- ❖ Central Govt. will give over all direction for the implementation of the scheme based on the plan submitted by the state Govt. according to the need of the area, the scheme will be supervised by the state govt.
- ❖ Suo Moto disclosure of all information and monthly progress of the scheme to be disclosed on the website.
- ❖ Programme officer will be responsible for proper implementation of the programme as well as for all discrepancies.
- ❖ Must roll checking is to be conducted in due interval as a regular exercise by the BDO.

Social Audit (Transparency & Accountability Tool)

A social audit is a process in which the people work with the government to monitor and evaluate the planning and implementation of a scheme or programme, or indeed of a policy or law. The social audit process is critically dependent on the demystification and wide dissemination of all relevant information.

Social audit - conducted jointly by the government and the people, especially by those people who are affected by, or are the intended beneficiaries of, the scheme being audited.

- Can bring on board the perceptions and knowledge of the people,
- can look at outcomes and not just outputs,
- Can involve the people in the task of verification,
- Also, much greater acceptability by the government.



- Social Audit under NREGA can be conceived in two ways, one is the process (round the year) and another is a forum (atleast once in six months)
- Social Audit is a continuous process
- Gram Sabha is entitled to conduct the social audit
- Grampanchayat is liable to provide all necessary documents and support to Gram Sabha for conducting the social audit.
- The social audit forum is to be conducted in every 6 month
- Programme officer is accountable for conducting the audit.
- The expenditure borne for the same to meet from NREGA funds
- Ensuring that all decisions, and their rationale, are made public as soon as they are made.
- Ensuring that measurements, certification and inspection involves the affected people on a random and rotational basis.
- All information related to the implementation of the Scheme should be brought under public domain.
- The president of the social audit forum should be neutral person from outside
- The secretary & agenda announcer should be the persons not connected to any Govt. Office or panchayat or any NREGA project
- Activities & decisions taken under the last Social Audit must be discussed prior to the start of a new audit.
- Social Audit forum organisers must ensure signing the (resolution of the meeting / proceedings) both at the beginning and end of the meeting.

The session began with a recapitulation of Day one's discussion and the points were clearly elaborated by Sri Chitta Behera.

NREGS and Muster Roll

Using Muster roll is a colonial system of allotting numbers to individuals or men in the military regiment. In the context of NREGS it is used to keep a record of the labours who have been given employment, their days of work, wages, job card details etc. These muster rolls are to be kept at the work site and are to be regularly updated without fail. It is infact the most crucial document of the entire programme and must be available for public scrutiny as and when required.

Special Components of Muster Rolls & Significance under the Scheme

- ❖ Beneficiaries Name and Number will be there
- ❖ Measurement of work done by the worker and payment according to the same.
- ❖ The Muster Roll carries the signature of the workers against payment of wage
- ❖ Muster Roll is only applicable for unskilled workers and not for skilled and semi skilled workers.
- ❖ Every worker who works for 7 hrs a day is entitled to receive the full wage.
- ❖ The muster roll such be maintained in such a manner that the work done in past would also reflect years after its completion.
- ❖ If maintained neatly and properly this very document can be handy in checking

Further Sri Behera also discussed that the Act prescribes that muster roll is to be used and brought under public domain, however practically it has been kept as a secret documents.

Some Studies conducted on Implementation of NREGS

He further discussed on the different studies conducted by different agencies on the implementation of the scheme and their response on the implementation of the act in Orissa.

Based on the learning of last one and a half day the participants were asked to do a group exercise on what are the problems and based on the learning how they have planned to mitigate them.



Group Exercise

Sl No	Problem	Causes	Need	Proposed Action
1	Corruption from top to bottom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Competition between contractors for work. ❖ Misuse of power ❖ Mutual agreement between elected representatives and govt. officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Decentralization of power ❖ Transparency in the work of the elected representative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aware and empower the PRIs ❖ Regularise the social audit ❖ Verification of muster roll under RTI
2	Substandard work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of Technical knowledge ❖ Lack of participation ❖ The guideline is not location specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Right person to be appointed in vigilance committee ❖ Awareness ❖ Flexibility in the guideline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Training of the social action group. ❖ RTI
3	The plan of Palli sabha not being implemented properly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Palli sabha not conducted duly ❖ Lack of willingness from people's end ❖ Mutual agreement between contractors and officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Transparency in pallisabha ❖ Sanctioned work to be resubmitted before palli sabha ❖ Contractor and officials to be accountable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ RTI
4	Corruption in issue of job cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of knowledge on the act ❖ Illiteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ People's awareness ❖ Social watch group and transparency workers to be strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Muster roll Inspection ❖ Social Audit ❖ RTI ❖ Grievance Submission
5	Lack of transparency in Social Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Information is not disseminated for covering the corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Regular Social Audit. ❖ Creating awareness at gram sabha level. ❖ People to be duly informed about the schedule of the Social Audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ RTI
6	Absence of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Incompetent people appointed. ❖ Hiding information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Competent people to be appointed ❖ Information to be people oriented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ RTI ❖ Grievance submission

Another group came up with following findings

Sl No	Problem	Causes	Need	Proposed Action
1	Lack of awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Illiteracy ❖ Unwillingness from villagers ❖ Weak publicity ❖ Unwillingness from villagers ❖ Weak publicity ❖ Corrupt officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Robust Publicity ❖ Capacity building training ❖ Activate the gram Sabha and pallisabha ❖ Village level organization to be trained ❖ Publicity through hoarding at public places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Regular programmes for strengthening the village organizations. ❖ Processions ❖ Skids and road shows.
2	Involving people in Micro Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not have the adequate information ❖ Do not have adequate training ❖ Unwillingness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Prior information ❖ Village level meeting and training for participation ❖ Leadership development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identifying grassroots organizations and capacity building.
3	Information and knowledge gap for grievance submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Illiteracy ❖ Lack of cooperation from govt. officials level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Publicity measures ❖ Creating pressure on the govt. departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Creating dedicated volunteers
4	Lack of knowledge on NREGA guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Unwillingness from govt. departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Providing guideline in local language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Wide dissemination of the same
5	Lack of transparency in wage payment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Delayed payment ❖ Unnecessary delay in bill preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Appointing technical officers in each gram panchayat ❖ Change in the system of wage payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Special training to village level workers and Rojgar Sevaks.
6	Misuse of Job Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fake commitments to job card holders and retaining their cards. ❖ In complete job cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Training of labour leaders and labourers ❖ Providing detail information to the job card holders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Village level training.
7	Corruption in Muster rolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Used as a Secret document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Training on the inspection of the muster roll 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conducting social audit. ❖ Training on RTI
8	Bogus Gramsabha and palli Sabha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Unwillingness ❖ Lack of interest from govt. officials end for organizing such sabhas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Activating the gram sbha and palli sabha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Efforts at the non govt. level.
9	Dormant role of the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mutual Agreement between media and corrupt officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Involvement of the media people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Information on the Act and the guidelines ❖ Regular meetings and performance appraisal.

The findings were discussed amongst the participants and emphasis was laid on using the tools like Muster roll inspection, conducting regular social audit, to file RTI and using the NREGA grievance services.

Session 2

Started with a small AV on the corruption under NREGS at Rajasthan, the AV depicted the level of corruption at the village where bogus canals have been created on documents, where as no such infrastructure exists in reality. Followed by which another presentation was shown on the quality monitoring of the rural roads constructed under PMGSY.

India is increasingly integrating ICT into its national development plans and adopting strategies for its widespread promotion in all the spheres of economic activities. There is a need to ensure that the benefit of the ICT percolates to all the different socio-economic strata and to the grass roots of the rural India. Sri Mainak Sarkar took a session on what he called the rural information centre. He went on to explain the importance of the rural call centre and ITC as an enabler.

Vision

Information and Knowledge Sharing for Economic Development and Social Justice"

How do ICT help

Sharing Information

Increase in availability of information reduces uncertainties which lead to better decision making, consequently affecting transacting costs and efficiencies

Saves time

Overcoming Geography

Distances and sociopolitical boundaries can be overcome by use of ICTs, bringing buyers and sellers expanding the scope of access to bigger market place

Nurturing Transparency

ICTs makes it possible to reach to the masses using cost effective technologies driving a demand for greater openness and transparency thereby bringing accountabilities in the system

What ICT provides

- Information
- *Knowledge Product*
- *Services*

He then went on to explain the possible services that can be provided at the call centre to run it on a sustainable basis as well as services with regard to NREGA



1. *INFORMATION DISSIMINATION*
2. *PHOTOGRAPHY*

3. *DTP*
4. *PHOTOCOPY*
5. *COMPUTER TRAINING*
6. *SALE OF NTFP PRODUCTS*
7. *INTERNET BROWSING*
8. *PCO – STD*
9. *TICKET BOOKING (RAILWAYS/ BUSES)*
10. *SALE OF INSURANCE PRODUCTS*
11. *SOIL TESTING*
12. *E- TREASURY*
13. *SALE OF APPLICATION FORMS FOR JOBS / EXAMS*
14. *SALE OF NEWSPAPERS*
15. *SALE OF MOBILE RECHARGE COUPON*
16. *BUILDING LINKAGES – BACKWARD & FORWARD LINKAGES*
17. *NON – FINANCIAL BANKING SERVICES*
18. *CREATING BLOCK LEVEL DATABASE*
19. *ADVERTISEMENT & CLASSIFIED SERVICES*

NREGA Services

1. *APPLICATION FOR JOB CARD*
2. *PHOTOGRAPHY*
3. *APPLICATION FOR JOBSEEKERS*
4. *APPLICATION FOR LODGING COMPLAINT AND RTI APPLICATION*
5. *INFORMATION ON NREGS*
6. *INFORMATION ON LABOUR BUDGET, SANCTIONED WORKS – GP WISE*
7. *INFORMATION ON EXPENDITURE & PROJECT COMPLETION AGAINST PLAN*
8. *MAINTAIN A DATABASE OF JOBCARD HOLDERS*
9. *DETAILED LIST OF SOCIAL AUDITS AND GP WISE SOCIAL AUDIT CALENDAR*
10. *SHOWING FILMS ON NREGS*

Followed by this a group exercise was conducted involving all the participants to develop a business model for the Rural Call Centre. The participants were divided in two groups and were given 30 mins to prepare a business plan to run the call centre based on certain business prerequisites, need of the area, USP of the respective call centres etc.

Both the teams came up with different business plan suiting their area that is Jashipur and Thakurmunda and made the presentations. However after the presentations the resource person Sir Sarkar was of the view that the models did not take into account the expenditure of the Centre per year properly while making the business plan.

Day 3 6th Feb 2010

The session was completely devoted towards the rectifications in the business development plans and further developing plans for the call centre where following suggestions emerged,

- ❖ *Ayurvedic Medicinal Consultancy*
- ❖ *Organic Products*
- ❖ *Handicraft Product*
- ❖ *Running the call centre on membership basis and discount basis services*
- ❖ *Sale of Insurance Policies*
- ❖ *Information sharing through sms*
- ❖ *Community news paper*

- ❖ SRI Booklet
- ❖ Agency contact Number
- ❖ Centralized solar charging system
- ❖ Mobile Library
- ❖ Seasonal Training to SHGs
- ❖ Panchayat Resource Data
- ❖ Business Development Services
- ❖ Tele Centre

The crux of the discussion was laid on 2 major factors that are to be taken into account while running the call centre, to find out a unique selling price for the call centre and running an entrepreneurial system without compromising with the vision.