

Where is the People's Government!

'In democracy, a sensitised and welfare government is "by the people and for the people". But unfortunately, despite completing 60 years of independence, due to some reasons, it has not been really come true. In our country, in a real sense, the formation of government for the people is still a dream. In order to realise the dream of "good governance", by generating awareness and mobilising the public, the civil society has to attempt collectively'.

The above message was conveyed by Smt. Sumitra Singh, Speaker, Rajasthan State Legislative Assembly, while addressing in the inaugural session as the Chief Guest on the occasion of the 'Assembly of Grassroots Change Makers' organised by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International) at Birla Auditorium, Jaipur on August 18, 2008 as part of series of events to mark the silver jubilee celebrations. The theme of the Assembly was 'Role of Civil Society in Good Governance'.

Citing CUTS example of making the rural populace aware and empowered, through the medium of a wall newspaper '*Gram Gadar*' that began 25 years ago, she pointed out the significance and prime role of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) towards ensuring the "good governance". She further added that like CUTS, other CSOs could also play an important role in the area of "good governance" from grassroots to international level, by making public aware for their rights and duties.

During the occasion, Shri Surendra Goyal, Minister for Urban Development & Housing, Local Self Government stated that the adulteration in consumable commodities push the public on health risks, on the other hand the adulterates get political support. It is very essential to develop a sense of responsibility amongst the public, for the nation and that is only possible if there is a courageous society determining the wrongful acts. The CSOs through collective advocacy with the government should ensure stringent provisions for strong actions against the culprits.

While chairing the thematic session on 'Role of Civil Society in Good Governance', Dr. Sharda Jain opined that society is still fragmented and where and how the changes could be introduced, only the CSOs who are active in that respective area/s, could only understand. For that, the CSOs has to come forward collectively in form of a group to ensure "good governance".

As one of the panelists of the session, Prof. Vijay Shankar Vyas (*Padma Bhushan*) stated that "CSOs should work in unity with an aim consisted of three prime objectives: "advocacy", "protest" and "initiative" for the "good governance".

The other panelist of the same session, Justice Vinod Shankar Dave (Retired) stated that the "*inspector raj*" i.e. "prevailing corrupt monitoring mechanism in governance" is a principle cause of corruption in whole country and in order to put an end to it, the public itself has to perform the role of "inspector" as well as an "auditor". The CSOs, by taking the public into their stride, can very well accomplish this task".

In his opening remarks, Shri Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS threw light up on the organisation's interventions for the benefits of the common citizens and briefed the participants about the role performed by CUTS towards attaining the achievements, since its inception. He appeal the CSOs for their perennial support to CUTS for the cause of good governance.

On this occasion, Smt. Sumitra Singh honoured three journalists by the *Gram Gadar* yearly Awards. For the year 2007, the awardees are: Shri Chandra Mehta, Acting Editor, *Nafa Nuksan* for his published writings on the theme of 'Food Security' ; Shri Neetish Soni, Deputy Editor, *Rajasthan Patrika*, Sikar Edition on 'Environment & Bio Diversity' theme; and Shri Ram Charan Mali, Independent Journalist & Chief Editor, *Pakshik Vanvasi Express*, Baran up on 'Corruption: Curbing Development' theme.

The seminar drew the participation of more than 150 CSO representatives coming across all 33 districts of the Rajasthan state.